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The Souls
of the Righteous

—
SAVAGE

THE SOULS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

THEIR PLACE AND STATE

BETWEEN DEATH AND THE GENERAL RESURRECTION.



THE
SOULS OF THE RIGHTEOUS
*THEIR PLACE AND STATE
BETWEEN DEATH & THE GENERAL RESURRECTION.*

BY
WILLIAM RICHARD SAVAGE, M.A.,
TRIN. COLL. CANTAB.,
VICAR OF AWRE, GLOUCESTERSHIRE,
CHAPLAIN TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE LORD MAYOR OF LONDON, 1875-1876.

"Little indeed does it concern us, in this our mortal stage, to inquire whence the spirit hath come; but of what infinite concern is the consideration whither it is going! Surely such consideration demands the study of a life."—SOUTHEY.



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TO
THE RIGHT REVEREND
CHARLES JOHN,
Lord Bishop of Gloucester & Bristol,
CELEBRATED FOR HIS SACRED SCHOLARSHIP,
REVERED IN HIS EPISCOPAL CAPACITY,
BELOVED AS A MAN,
THIS MODEST ESSAY TOWARDS THE BETTER
UNDERSTANDING OF A MYSTERIOUS YET UNIVERSALLY
INTERESTING THEME
IS DEDICATED BY HIS LORDSHIP'S
ADMIRING, GRATEFUL, AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,
THE AUTHOR.



P R E F A C E.

WHEN I began to compose the following discourses, I had no desire beyond that of instructing and edifying the members of my flock: but the subject grew in the handling, and what was originally intended for an obscure village congregation, seemed likely to interest the Church at large.

With this hope in view, the manuscript has been placed in the publisher's hands.

Though I have attempted a tolerably full and exhaustive discussion of my theme, yet conscience bears me witness that, with a few

unimportant exceptions, I have not sought to be “wise above what is written,” nor to go further than the Bible—to use the quaint saying of an old divine—“did seem to lead me by the hand.”

There is certainly ample room in the wide field of sacred hermeneutics for the present essay. As far as my knowledge reaches, there are few if any works to be found which deal exclusively with this solemn topic. For that of Bishop Mant, entitled *The Happiness of the Blessed*, as also that of the late Dean Alford, called *The State of the Blessed Dead*, touch only the fringe of the subject, referring, except in a few opening pages, to the *final* and not to the *intermediate* state of the faithful departed.

If the present inquiry should tend to dissipate the popular yet erroneous notion of the

good "going straight to heaven when they die," I shall not regret it. The blessed realities of the intermediate state may be, as is here shown, expressed in truer yet hardly less glorious and soul-stirring phrase. We may still say that the souls of the faithful dead are "in the hand of God," "in Paradise"; that they have "entered into their rest" and are now "with Christ, which is far better." This should suffice to kindle our most ardent hopes and to stimulate our holiest endeavours.

My daily ruminations on "the future state," accompanied as they were perforce by the constant "searching" and "inwardly digesting" of the Scriptures, have been a comfort to me under prolonged and severe bodily affliction; may their outcome, in these pages, prove a solace to other sufferers! May their hearts be cheered by the prospect here set before them, so that

they may “endure patiently, as seeing Him Who is Invisible,” and hope to the end “for the glory that shall be revealed.”

With these few introductory remarks, I commend my little book to the candid and—I trust—benevolent reader. May God’s blessing go with it and make it useful in scattering some of that obscurity and removing some of those errors which becloud so many minds in relation to the matter of which it treats.

NOTE.—Canon Luckock’s able work, entitled *After Death*, only came into my hands just before I received the last proof sheets of this volume. As, however, “the lines” on which our labours are constructed are widely divergent, so also is the end sought and attained. Essentially erudite, Anglo-Catholic, and patristic,

it has hardly any affinity with a simple treatise like the present, which takes but small account of human authorities, however ancient, and draws all its arguments either directly or inferentially from the Word of God.

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SECTION I.

THE BLESSED DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

B

THE SOULS OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

CHAPTER I.

DEATH TO THE RIGHTEOUS—A MESSENGER OF MERCY.

ISAIAH LVII. 1, 2.

“The righteous perisheth and no man layeth it to heart, and merciful men are taken away ; none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.”

WHICH of my readers—I wonder—has been able, when meditating on this chapter, to affix a distinct and satisfactory meaning to its opening words? For my own part, I confess to have been long and sorely puzzled by them. They are certainly ambiguous, and appear susceptible of different senses according to the point of view from which they are regarded.

“The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart” Is this said reproachfully or

approvingly ? When the righteous perisheth ought the survivors to lay it to heart, considering that their own turn will come soon, or ought they not rather to rejoice, knowing that whatever their sufferings in this life, it is now—at the last—“*well with the righteous*”?

This was apparently the view taken by the compilers of our beautiful burial service, where the survivors, far from complaining of the death of their godly friends, are made to render “hearty thanks to God for that it hath pleased Him to deliver this their brother or sister out of the miseries of this sinful world.”

There are weighty lessons to be learnt, whichever interpretation of the Prophet’s words we adopt; may the Lord help me to discover and enforce them !

If, as seems most probable, censure of men’s general indifference to the removal of the righteous is here intended, it is certainly deserved.

Death is a very solemn thing ; and whenever it occurs, but especially in the case of good men, it ought to be laid to heart and pondered well by the living.

But why—you may ask—does the death of the righteous call to reflection even more than the

death of the wicked? Why—because it is only one out of many indirect proofs that this life is merely a term of probation, and that the final discrimination between the virtuous and the vicious must be looked for in another state of existence. If the righteous, in spite of his integrity and notwithstanding all his endeavours to please God, is no more exempt than other men from suffering and sorrow and the last great stroke of death, is it not reasonable to suppose that the recompense of his reward is yet to come? Thus, the death of the righteous, whilst it serves as an incentive to those who are followers of their faith and patience, ought to serve as a warning to the wicked. They ought to lay it most seriously to heart, and to ask themselves, according to the Apostles' teaching, "if judgment must thus begin at the house of God, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel; and if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" "When God calls home His ambassadors," one has quaintly, yet truly said, "He is evidently preparing for war." Thus the death of the righteous is a summons to the wicked to agree with an offended God, their Adversary, quickly, whiles they are in the way with Him, and to accept

those easy conditions of peace which He offers in the gospel of his dear Son, ere it be too late.

It also exhorts the believer to redeem the time because it is short and the days are evil : “to work diligently whilst it is day, since the night cometh when no man can work.”

Whilst, then, the death of the righteous ought always to be “laid to heart” it ought never to be “taken to heart”—that is, it ought never to furnish occasion for excessive mourning or immoderate grief. Nature will, of course, seek relief in tears, nor are these to be blamed. They bear touching witness to the affection we had for the departed ; though some griefs, we know, are too great for tears ; and dry eyes often conceal aching and desolated hearts. But, what we ought always to remember, when any of our friends die, who have taken the Lord for their Righteousness whilst they lived, and are therefore “righteous in His sight,” and “accepted in the Beloved,” is, that we do not “sorrow for them as those who have no hope.” If for them to live was Christ, to die must be gain, so that we who survive, ought rather to rejoice that they are now delivered from the burden of the flesh, and are in joy and felicity, amongst the spirits of the just, in the more immediate presence of their Lord.

This is one good reason why we should not *take* their deaths to heart. Another is alleged by the prophet in the next clause of my text, "merciful men," or, as the Hebrew beautifully expresses it, "men of kindness" "are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." Even the heathen had a proverb, "whom the gods love, die young," and surely a Christian's philosophy ought to excel theirs. Thus, when we see a man of God, whose life was full of mercy and of good fruits, cut off in the flower of his age and in the zenith of his usefulness, we must not be offended at such deaths, or regard them as unmitigated calamities; we must rather pause and consider how many purposes of compassion the Lord may have had in view, in thus early removing such an one to his eternal rest. The sceptic and the infidel will doubtless take such deaths as a proof that there is "no reward for the righteous," and that "verily there is no God which judgeth the earth." *They* will be apt to draw the false conclusion which Solomon drew in the days of his vanity, when his distempered spirit made him give way to utter despair. "All things," he cried, "come alike to all"; "there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, to the good and to the clean and to the

unclean, to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not : as is the good, so is the sinner ; and he that sweareth as he that feareth an oath : the dead know not anything, also their love and their hatred, and their envy is now perished, neither have they any more a reward."

Such is the atheist's desperate creed, but the Christian bids such gloomy doubts avaunt ! If they should haply for a moment disturb his mind, he exorcises them with some such clear assurance as that of his risen Saviour : "I am the Resurrection and the Life : he that believeth in Me, though he were dead yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

Or perchance, he finds consolation in the thought here suggested by Isaiah, and *considers* that "merciful men are often taken away *from the evil to come.*" The page of inspiration supplies us with two remarkable instances of God's gracious dealings with His servants in this respect. One, which was perhaps more especially in the prophet's thoughts, is that of the youthful and pious king of Judah, Josiah.

The spoilers of his kingdom were gathering themselves together on every side, and the destined hour of its destruction was approaching, but God

in His mercy promised that his eyes should not behold that dreadful overthrow. The prophetess Huldah, to whom he had sent to inquire of the Lord, returned Him this answer : " Thus saith the Lord God of Israel : Behold ! I will bring evil upon this place and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book that the king of Judah hath read, because they have forsaken Me, and have burned incense unto other gods that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands, therefore My wrath shall be kindled against this place and shall not be quenched : but to the king of Judah which sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall ye say to him : Because thine heart was tender and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord when thou heardest what I spake against this place and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before Me, I also have heard thee, saith the Lord, behold therefore I will gather thee unto thy fathers, *and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace, and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I bring upon this place.*"

Another noteworthy example of this most comfortable truth, that " right dear in the sight of the

Lord is the death of His saints," and that their removal is often a signal token of His favour towards them, may be found in the case of the sick child of wicked Jeroboam. Sinner though he was, he had yet a parent's affection for his offspring, and when his child was taken ill, he sent his wife to inquire of the Lord if there were any hopes of its recovery. The answer, though terrible for him, was yet a "mercy in disguise." "Arise," said the prophet, "get thee to thine own house, and when, thy feet enter into the city, the child shall die and all Israel shall mourn for him and bury him : *for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found some good things towards the Lord God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam.*"

Some remarkable secular—as well as sacred—instances of this truth have been noted by Divines. "The removal of godly and useful men by what we wrongly call a 'premature death' is a sign of impending judgments upon impenitent sinners. God often acts towards his people, as the husbandman does by his corn ; when he sees a storm coming, he hurries it with all haste into the barn, that it may be out of harm's way. Methuselah, e.g. died a year before the flood ; the great Christian father, Augustine, a year before the sacking of Hippo,

the city where he dwelt ; Luther, the strong pillar of Protestantism, a little before the long and sanguinary wars broke out in Germany.

From these and many like instances the truth of Isaiah's words appears : " Merciful men are taken away from the evil to come."

The reason why " none," or at least very few, " consider this " is because we are all too prone to regard death as a *punishment for sin*. And so undoubtedly in a certain sense it is : if there had been no sin there would have been no death—and yet, for the righteous, death is only the necessary introduction to a higher life, and for such, the grave is the gate of immortality.

Our senses can take cognisance of *bodily death*, and therefore it strikes us most, but *spiritual death*, the death of the soul, is what we ought alone to dread. This, our Saviour teaches in those awful words, " fear not them which kill the body and after that have no more that they can do ; but fear Him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell, yea ! I say unto you fear Him."

Our earth is so often but a scene of suffering and a vale of tears, that for us, who believe that God's promises are faithful and true, the

death of the righteous ought not to be a *stumbling-block*: nay! rather it ought to be a *stepping-stone* to our faith and make us pray all the more fervently, that "God would be pleased shortly to accomplish the number of His elect and to hasten His kingdom, that we, with all those who are departed in the true faith of His holy name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss both in body and soul, in His eternal and everlasting kingdom."

CHAPTER II.

THE END OF THE RIGHTEOUS—PEACE.

ISAIAH LVII. 2.

“He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.”

THE state of the blessed dead, as revealed to us in the text, is represented as one of mingled repose and activity. “They shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds: each one walking in his uprightness.” Here, three things are predicated of them: first, their peaceful *departure*; then, the *repose* which awaits their emancipated spirits; and lastly, the *moral energy* which they still continue to display, even in their disembodied state. In the original Hebrew, “they shall enter into peace,” is literally “they shall *go* in peace,” and appears to refer to the circumstances attending their decease rather than to the condition on which they enter. This, however,

is declared in the next clause, "they shall rest in their beds."

In this second discourse I propose very briefly to show how true is this description of the dying saints —how calm and peaceful is the *end* of their life-pilgrimage, however painful and troubled may have been their previous experiences. In subsequent discourses I shall treat of the state *on which* they enter when they depart out of this world, and *in which* they remain until the general Resurrection.

It ought, methinks, to be a very comfortable reflection to all godly sufferers, that it is written, not only "the righteous hath hope in his death," but that his very *departure* shall be full of peace. There are scarcely any death-bed scenes depicted in the Bible but in the case of the righteous, what *is* told us, answers accurately to what we are here assured of: "Their end was peace."

How placid and peaceful *e.g.* is the description of Abraham's decease: "Then Abraham gave up the ghost and died, in a good old age, an old man and full of years;" or that of Jacob, "and when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed and yielded up the ghost and was gathered unto his people."

The peace of a death-bed may indeed some-

times be only the quiet of mortal weakness and approaching dissolution, so that it is not always a sure test of the state of the dying in the sight of God. There are those who, having lived like tigers or swine, yet "go off," as the saying is, "like lambs." When, however, a peaceful death follows on a holy and Christ-like life, there can be no mistaking its significance. There are many notable instances of such calm departures. That of Sir James Simpson, the eminent Scottish physician and the discoverer of chloroform, is one of them. In early life, I believe, he was somewhat of a sceptic, but, when I knew him in his later years, he had ripened into a most decided and devout Christian. Shortly before his decease, and when the pains of death already encompassed him, he wrote, "my sole and whole trust is in the love and work of Christ as my all-sufficient Sin-Bearer and Saviour." As his last moments drew near, he repeated that sweet hymn, commencing, "Just as I am, without one plea :" at its conclusion he said, "I so love that hymn ! What a wonderful redemption this is : Christ's blood can float a cork or a man-of-war. It can bear every one to heaven who trusts in it." Very soon after, he expired.

A touching example of peace in affliction came within my own ministerial experience. I went to see a poor old man, over seventy, who lay stretched upon a bed of pain, yet was kept in perfect peace by his implicit trust in the goodness and wisdom of his heavenly Father. I asked him if he could read, he said "Yes! but now his eyes were too dim and his sufferings too great to admit of this source of consolation." I then expressed a hope that the many sweet promises of Scripture which had been his delight in health were not forgotten. "Oh, no! sir," he said, "*they come up like stars.*" What a beautiful answer, methought, was this from a poor, illiterate, yet God-taught soul. As the stars come out in the darkness one by one, till the great vault of heaven is spangled with them, so the promises and precepts of God's blessed word shone, in all their glory and beauty, upon the fainting heart of this aged saint, illumining with their bright radiance the darkness of his dying hours.

What a gracious fulfilment of that Scripture, "Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee—because he trusteth in Thee."

May God in His mercy vouchsafe each of us a

like happy end ! May we all quit this life with some such calm confidence as that of Simeon of old, when in the temple at Jerusalem he took the infant Saviour in his arms and said, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." Though the gift of poesy be denied us, may we have a like spirit of faith to that which breathes through Bishop Porteus' prayer :—

"At Thy good time let death approach. And Thou,
Whom soft-eyed pity once led down from heaven
To bleed for man—to teach him how to live—
And oh ! still harder lesson—how to die :
Disdain not Thou to soothe the restless bed
Of sickness and of pain : forgive the tear
That feeble Nature drops : calm all her fears :
Fix her firm trust on Thy triumphant cross :
Wake all her hopes, and animate her faith,
Till my rapt soul, anticipating heaven,
Bursts from the thralldom of encumbering clay,
And, on the wing of ecstasy upborne,
Springs into liberty and light and life."

SECTION II.

***NATURAL PROBABILITIES TOUCHING THE
STATE AND PLACE OF THE SOULS OF THE
RIGHTEOUS BETWEEN DEATH AND THE
GENERAL RESURRECTION.***

CHAPTER III.

THE CONCLUSIONS OF REASON CONCERNING THE FUTURE LIFE.

ECCLESIASTES XI. 5.

"Thou knowest not the way of the spirit."

IT is a melancholy but certain truth, that the bulk of mankind is so engrossed by the petty and fleeting concerns of this present life, that it is only when compelled by sickness and suffering, by the loss of beloved friends, or by their own approaching dissolution, that they will pause a while in their reckless career and suffer their minds to dwell on the awful and imminent realities of the world to come.

Our deceitful hearts but too readily furnish us with plausible excuses for neglecting or postponing indefinitely the consideration of the things of that eternity, upon which we must all soon enter.

Perhaps the commonest of pleas, openly avowed or secretly cherished by us, for remaining in this state of wilful ignorance, is, that the whole subject is so mysterious—so encumbered by the various and conflicting theories of those who have studied it, and so far removed from all our experiences on this side the tomb, that it is hopeless to try and understand it. “We had best not trouble ourselves about it,” it is urged; “our truest wisdom is to wait—to do those duties which lie before us, and to leave the future in the hands of a gracious and merciful God, Who knows what is most expedient for us, and will make all things work together for our final good, if we love Him and keep His commandments.” Now, if this plea be put forward in all sincerity, it may be allowed to have a certain weight; but when, as is most frequently the case, it is a mere sop wherewith we lull our consciences to sleep, and fancy that, if we ignore the future, we are absolved from making provision for it—if this is only an excuse for continuing in our wilful and worldly ways, without either the fear of God before our eyes or the love of God in our hearts—then it must be denounced not only as a *foolish* delusion, but as a most *dangerous* and *deadly* deceit. When we consider what a strong

incentive to virtue, what a powerful restraint upon the evil passions of our nature, the hope of everlasting happiness affords, it is evident that such a motive ought never to be lost sight of. The neglect of it is wholly indefensible, unless it could be *proved*—as is often *taken for granted*, even by professing Christians—that the knowledge of what awaits us on the further side of Death’s dark valley, is not merely beyond our reach, but would, if certainly known, be almost unintelligible to us in our present state. Now, it cannot be denied that apart from the Book of Inspiration, neither the voices of imagination, of reason, nor of conscience can supply us with any but the most vague and dubious hints as to the place and state of our souls after they quit the body, or of our “whole man” when body and soul are reunited at the general resurrection.

Imagination amongst the heathen has, we know, drawn the most vivid pictures both of the joys and the woes of the departed. The Elysian fields of unalloyed delight, and the dismal realms of Tartarus, as conceived by the old Greeks and Romans; the metempsychosis of the Buddhists; Mahomet’s sensual abodes of bliss; the happy hunting-grounds

of the North American Indian, and last, but not least the hideous doctrine of Purgatory, as taught by the corrupt Church of Rome—all these guesses at futurity may at once be put aside as worthless, as the offspring of wondering ignorance, of worldly lusts, or of priestly greed and ambition. Even the theories of sober reason, though not so grotesque or repulsive, have been only “guesses in the dark,” more or less distant approaches to the truth. Our reason, though it teaches the probability of a future state, where those various capacities, mental and spiritual, which are here but in their infancy, may develop and perfect themselves—a state where the wrongs of earth may be righted, and the glaring inequalities of human fortune be redressed—where the reign of passion and prejudice may be cut short, and Justice and Virtue enthroned in their stead—tells us what it *hopes* rather than what it *knows*. Not even Conscience—albeit she seldom fails to raise her voice when insulted, bidding the sinner beware of the consequences of his sins, and painting dread pictures of future retribution—can speak here with absolute authority. If we wish for assurance in the matter—and in that which concerns us so nearly, suspense ought to be intolerable—we must go to the Bible for it. That blessed

Book alone can throw some light upon a subject which is otherwise wrapped in impenetrable gloom.

First, then, dear reader, at the outset of the present discussion, I would ask you to remember that it concerns, not our *last*, but our *intermediate* state—the state of the blessed dead *before* the general Judgment—not the more glorious and clearly revealed destiny of those faithful souls who after the great and final Assize shall attain their perfect consummation and bliss—both in body and soul—in God's eternal kingdom.

Since, however, different minds are influenced by different motives, and “all men have not faith,” it may be worth while to reckon up, first, for the benefit of the “weaker brethren,” what we may term the “*human probabilities*,” which, though in themselves inconclusive, supplement the “*divine certainties*” of our continued and conscious existence, when we leave this earthly scene.

It is true, as the text reminds us, that we do not *certainly* know the way of the spirit; but that the soul does not pass into a state of *unconsciousness* when it leaves the body is *probable* on several grounds.

The error into which many people have fallen on this subject, that, viz., the intermediate state is one of blank unconsciousness,—an error in which not a few Christians calmly acquiesce,—has seemingly arisen from the natural resemblance between death and sleep, strengthened as it is by the frequent use of the figure of “sleep” to represent “death” in the holy Scriptures. Yet, as even a slight consideration may serve to show, such an idea is not warranted by the observed phenomena of sleep itself. This is not always a state of unconsciousness. In sleep, the brain is often as busy—the faculties of recollection, reason, imagination as active—the impressions made upon the senses as vivid and sometimes more vivid than in our waking moments. It is a fact supported by numberless testimonies—a fact which the past experience of some of my readers may be able to confirm, that our memories are often more retentive, and our powers of thought and expression greater, during sleep than when we are awake. Most people who have a knowledge of foreign tongues, will believe me when I affirm, that I have often conversed in French and German, when asleep, more fluently and, I believe, more correctly than I could at other times. Hamlet’s famous soliloquy, when

intent on thoughts of suicide, must be familiar to us all—

“To be, or not to be,—that is the question :
 To die,—to sleep :—
No more ; and, by a sleep, to say we end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to—’tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished ! To die,—to sleep :—
To sleep ! *perchance to dream*:—ay, there’s the rub ;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause.

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor’s wrong, the proud man’s contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law’s delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin ? who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover’d country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of ?”

The language of Revelation, therefore, and the language of the poets, who speak of “Death’s

twin-brother, Sleep," though beautiful and true in some striking respects, need not for a moment compel us to believe that death is a kind of stupor or insensibility, from which we shall not be aroused until the trumpet of the archangel summons us to don our resurrection-bodies and appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

I have disposed, I think conclusively, of this objection. Let us now pass to a consideration of one or two of the *human probabilities* to which I have already alluded.

That the career of the spirit is not arrested by death appears probable for this amongst other reasons, viz., that it is often found in full vigour up to the very last moment of its sojourn on earth. Sometimes the pains of death are so severe, that the senses are mercifully over-powered, and the soul appears to leave the body in a state of complete unconsciousness. Often, however, this is not so. I have heard an authentic story of a famous physician who, as he lay a-dying, timed his pulses to their very last throb. Of the great and good Bishop Hall it is related that "when his time to depart drew near, many of the noble and learned and pious gathered to

his chamber to implore his dying prayers, and bear away his dying benediction. After much time spent in devotion and many words of gracious exhortation, he summoned his expiring energies to make the last confession of his faith, and while so engaged, the agonies of death came upon him, and he passed away."

Another remarkable instance of mental vigour, retained even amidst the throes of dissolution, is furnished by the last moments of Robert Hall, the celebrated Nonconformist divine. His medical attendant thus describes his end:—"On entering the room I found him sitting on the sofa, surrounded by his lamenting family, with one foot in the hot water and the other spasmodically grasping the edge of the bath: his frame waving in violent, almost convulsive, heavings, sufficiently indicative of the process of dissolution. I hastened, though despairingly, to administer such stimulants as might possibly avert the threatening termination of life; and as I sat by his side for the purpose, he threw his arm over my shoulders for support, and with a look of evident satisfaction that I was near him, he said to me: 'I am dying: death is come at last: all will now be useless.' As I pressed upon him draughts of stimulants, he

intimated that he would take them if I wished, but he believed all was useless. On my asking him if he suffered much he replied, ‘ Dreadfully.’ The rapidly increasing gasping soon overpowered his ability to swallow, or to speak, except in monosyllables, few in number, which I could not collect : but whatever might be the degree of his suffering—and great it must have been—*there was no failure of his mental vigour or composure.* Indeed, so perfect was his consciousness that in the midst of these last agonies he signified to me, very shortly before the close, with his accustomed courtesy, a fear lest he should fatigue me by his pressure : and when his family, one after another, gave way in despair, he followed them with sympathising looks as they were obliged to be conveyed from the room. These were his last voluntary movements, for immediately a general convulsion seized him, and he quickly expired.”

“ Oh, how inconceivably blessed,” adds his biographer, “ is the change, when at the moment of utmost agony the soul enters the regions of endless joy : passes from the land of the dying to the land of the living : from the society of saints to the blissful presence of the King of saints,

where knowledge, illumination, purity, and love flow for ever and ever from the inexhaustible fountain."

The graphic pages of Lord Macaulay,¹ the most brilliant of English historians, shall supply us with our last example. It is the death-bed scene of one of the ablest and best of our sovereigns, William III. "The king, meanwhile, was sinking fast. Albemarle had arrived at Kensington from the Hague, exhausted by rapid travelling. His master kindly bade him go to rest for some hours, and then summoned him to make his report. That report was in all respects satisfactory. The States-General were in the best temper: the troops, the provisions, and the magazines were in the best order. Everything was in readiness for an early campaign. William received the intelligence with the calmness of a man whose work was done. He was under no illusion as to his danger. 'I am fast drawing,' he said, 'to my end.' His end was worthy of his life. *His intellect was not for a moment clouded.* His fortitude was the more admirable because he was not willing to die. He had very lately said to one of those whom he most loved, 'You know that I never feared death: there

¹ Macaulay's *History of England*, ch. xxv. p. 344.

have been times when I should have wished it : but now that this great new prospect is opening before me, I do wish to stay here a little longer.' Yet no weakness, no querulousness disgraced the noble close of that noble career. To the physicians, the king returned his thanks graciously and gently. 'I know that you have done all that skill and learning could do for me, but the case is beyond your art, and I submit.' From the words which escaped him he seemed to be frequently engaged in mental prayer. Burnet and Tenison remained many hours in the sick room. He professed to them his firm belief in the truth of the Christian religion, and received the Sacrament from their hands with great seriousness. The antechambers were crowded all night with lords and privy councillors. He ordered several of them to be called in, and exerted himself to take leave of them with a few kind and cheerful words. . . . He strained his feeble voice to thank Auverquerque for the affectionate and loyal services of thirty years. To Albemarle he gave the keys of his closet and of his private drawers. 'You know,' he said, 'what to do with them.' By this time he could scarcely respire. 'Can this,' he said to the physicians, 'last long?' He was told that the

end was approaching. He swallowed a cordial and asked for Bentinck. These were his last articulate words. Bentinck instantly came to the bedside, bent down, and placed his ear close to the king's mouth. The lips of the dying man moved, but nothing could be heard. The king took the hand of his earliest friend and pressed it tenderly to his heart. In that moment, no doubt, all that had cast a slight passing cloud over their long and pure friendship, was forgotten. It was now between seven and eight in the morning. He closed his eyes and gasped for breath. The bishops knelt down and read the commendatory prayer. When it ended William was no more."

There is a passage in Bishop Butler's famous work, *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature*,¹ which touches closely on this present question. "There are instances," he says, "of mortal diseases which do not at all affect our present intellectual powers: and this affords a presumption that those diseases will not destroy those present powers. Indeed, from the observations made above, it appears that there is no presumption from their mutually affecting each other, that the dissolution

¹ Butler's *Analogy*, ch. i.

of the body is the destruction of the living agent. Instances of mortal diseases not impairing our present reflecting powers, evidently turn our thoughts even from imagining such diseases to be the destruction of them. Several things indeed greatly affect all our living powers, and at length suspend the exercise of them: as, for instance, drowsiness increasing till it ends in sound sleep: and from hence we might have imagined that it would destroy them, till we found by experience the weakness of this way of judging. But, in the diseases now mentioned, there is not so much as the shadow of probability to lead us to any such conclusion as to the reflecting powers which we have at present: for in those diseases, persons, the moment before death, appear to be in the highest vigour of life. They discover apprehension, memory, reason, all entire; with the utmost force of affection, sense of a character, of shame and honour, and the highest mental enjoyments and sufferings, even to the last gasp: and these surely prove even greater vigour of life than bodily strength does. Now what pretence is there for thinking that a progressive disease, when arrived to such a degree—I mean that degree which is mortal—will destroy those powers which were not

impaired—which were not affected by it—during its whole progress, quite up to that degree? And if death, by diseases of this kind, is not the destruction of our present reflecting powers, it will scarce be thought that death by any other means is."

A more conclusive argument than this of Bishop Butler can hardly be imagined. Is it conceivable, we may reasonably ask, that the mysterious force within us, which we call our "spirits," or "ourselves," should at one moment exist in fullest vigour, and the next moment be—I do not say annihilated, for of that there is here no question—but, entirely stunned and powerless? Far more in harmony with reason, as well as with Scripture, does that comparison appear, which likens soul and body to the organist and his instrument. When, from any cause, air ceases to be supplied, or the organ receives irreparable damage, the sound which lately issued from it ceases. Yet the *organist* is not paralysed, nor is his skill destroyed, or even diminished. He cannot play, because his organ is broken. In like manner, when disease attacks and finally breaks up our mortal frame, there is no good reason to suppose that our immortal spirits are in the least degree affected by it.

But another and stronger proof of my present contention may be alleged—stronger, at any rate, in the believer's judgment, however the scoffer and the infidel may make light of it; I mean those ecstasies and bright foretastes of bliss which the dying saints are often permitted to enjoy. I shall barely mention that “certain fearful looking-for of judgment,” and those awful terrors of impending wrath, wherewith dying and graceless sinners have been tormented before their time, though these are equally pertinent to my argument.

To dwell only on the happier theme. Unless, I say, we are prepared to believe that God mocks His dying people with delusive visions, these must be regarded as “*real presentiments*,” true earthly *glimpses* of those ineffable joys on which they are about to enter. There are thousands of well-attested instances of such triumphant departures, from that of the expiring martyr Stephen, onward to the present day. Two or three may here be fitly introduced.

Thomas Scott, the commentator, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, exclaimed, just before he died: “This is Heaven begun: I have done with darkness for ever. Satan is vanquished.

Nothing now remains but salvation, with eternal glory—*eternal glory.*"

Take another example from the late terrific explosion at Seaham Colliery, by which one hundred and sixty-seven human beings lost their lives. As a class, colliers, on the evidence of those who know them best, are devout. They are conscious that, every time they descend into the pit, they carry their lives in their hands, and are prepared, in many instances, by humble faith and blameless living, for the continual risk of sudden death which they incur. Though "unlearned and ignorant men," according to the world's standard, not a few of them are "taught of God," and "wise unto salvation." In the Seaham mine, when the workings were reached by the brave explorers, several days after the catastrophe, the following, amongst other touching relics of the dead, were found. An old ventilation door from the Maudlin seam, on which was chalked this writing: "All alive at three o'clock; together praying for help. Lord, have mercy upon us!—ROBERT JOHNSON." In another part was traced with chalk in a bold, clear hand, these words: "*The Lord has been with us. We are all ready for heaven.—RICHARD COLE.*" What shall we say of this latter testimony?

Written amid that "horror of great darkness," and from the very jaws of death, *can it* be aught else than the truth? Must we not believe that as the Lord heard the voice of Jonah when he "went down to the bottom of the mountains, and the earth, with her bars, was about him," He also vouchsafed His glorious presence to these poor souls, and comforted their dying hours? Let whoso will, regard those messages from the dead as mere frenzied phantasies, or as the hallucinations of pious ignorance, I prefer to see in them the fulfilment of David's confidence: "Though I walk through *the valley of the shadow of death*, yet will I fear no evil, *for Thou art with me.*"

Yet one more instance may suffice. It is the death-bed of a godly minister,¹ author of some of the most graceful hymns in the English language. "And who," writes one who was present with him when he died, "shall intrude upon the solemnity with which he confessed his soul was filled at that moment! He seemed rapt in holy communion with his God. There was a pause of deep and hallowed quiet, and then his soul found utterance,

¹ The Rev. C. B. Snepp, Author of *Hymns of Grace and Glory*.

though still apparently only speaking to its Maker. ‘Home:’ ‘Going home:’ ‘Home to my Saviour. Home to dear ones gone before. Home to the presence of my God.’ Another moment’s pause, and then the tones of prayer: ‘Lord! prepare me for going. Perfect in me that which is imperfect.’ About half-past two o’clock there seemed to be a change, and those around became conscious that he was fast nearing the haven of his eternal rest. And now we watched with thrilling hearts. Again we pleaded all together in prayer in an adjoining room. ‘Lord, spare his life.’ But the messenger was come, and we could only bow our heads and say: ‘Even so, Father.’ One of his own hymns was then read to him, and his radiant look of joy will never be forgotten. It seemed as though he were already catching some bright rays of the heavenly glory. We saw that he was on the very threshold—just stepping in to see the King. ‘Lord Jesus! receive my spirit,’ was the prayer of her who was so fondly ministering to him. He took it up: ‘Lord Jesus—’ but here the voice was hushed, and with a loving pressure of the hand he had passed from grace to glory.”

"Servant of God, well done !
Rest from thy loved employ :
The battle fought—the victory won :
Enter thy Master's joy !

Soldier of Christ, well done !
Praise be thy new employ,
And while eternal ages run,
Rest in thy Saviour's joy."

This much may suffice for a statement of the chief *natural probabilities* concerning the soul's unbroken and conscious existence after death. They must *all* be of considerable weight with the thoughtful, whilst to the devout mind they will sometimes amount—as in my latest instances—almost to *certainty*.

And yet, thanks be to God! if we are of the number of the faithful, we have still firmer ground for our confidence—even Divine Revelation. Turn we therefore to the "more sure word of prophecy." Here, if anywhere, it fully merits the description of the Apostle as "a light shining in a dark place."

SECTION III.

CERTAINTIES, PRIMARY AND DIVINE, TOUCHING THE STATE AND PLACE OF THE SOULS OF THE RIGHTEOUS BETWEEN DEATH AND THE GENERAL RESURRECTION.



CHAPTER IV.

"THE ABODE OF THE DEAD."

ECCLESIASTES III. 20.

"All go unto one place."

"O, YE spirits and souls of the righteous, bless ye the Lord, praise Him and magnify Him for ever,"—claims the unknown author of that beautiful canticle, entitled, "Benedicite Opera Omnia," which in our public worship we sometimes sing in lieu of the "Te Deum."

This hymn, though not forming an integral part of Scripture, and so, not inspired like the "Benedictus," or the "Magnificat," is yet quite to our purpose, as showing that the conscious, active, and happy state of the righteous dead, which we are now trying to *prove*, was a "pious opinion" several centuries before Christ.

In my last discourse on this deeply interesting subject I discussed several of the "human

probabilities" in favour of "this most comfortable doctrine." Let me now pass to a consideration of those "divine certainties" regarding it which the Bible—the Book of God—can alone supply.

Perhaps however the expression "divine certainties," which I have ventured to coin, requires some explanation, lest my argument, even when completed, should cause disappointment to some of my readers, as still leaving their minds perplexed or at least in suspense, concerning those very things about which they are most anxious for clear and positive knowledge. Let it then be understood that I use this phrase chiefly by way of contrast to that of "human probabilities" previously employed. It is the *source*, rather than the *sum*, or even the *weight*, of the evidence, which I desire hereby distinctly to indicate.

In the one case, we have mere natural reason and analogy for our guides in clearing up this dark problem; in the other, we have the more sure word of prophecy as contained in the Scriptures of God, which cannot be broken, and the express words of that Witness faithful and true, God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

Still the difficulties remain, not only of piecing together the scattered fragments of evidence—and

that mostly indirect—which the Scriptures afford, but also of duly estimating their significance and importance.

Taken singly, they may seem but obscure hints, upon which no certain conclusions can safely be founded, and yet, when brought together and rightly understood, they are found to corroborate each other so strongly that their cumulative force is more than enough to convince the devout mind.

Let us first inquire what the Scriptures have to tell us about the *place*, before we consider the *state*, of the blessed dead. Where do those who depart hence in the Lord go? If we seek to know the name or, rather, names—for there are several—of the place of their rest, our question admits of an explicit answer. If, however, we are still more inquisitive, and desire to learn the exact locality in which the souls of the righteous now abide, our curiosity can hardly be gratified. It may be somewhat of a surprise, and that a painful one, to many, to be told that all the evidence which can be collected on this point from the Old Testament, seems to indicate a *subterraneous* abode for the spirits of the dead, whether righteous or wicked, until the resurrection. That the souls of all the

departed are somewhere in the heart of the earth, was an opinion held by most of the early Christian fathers, and that this opinion is not without Scriptural authority we will presently show.

The very names used in the Old Testament all point to this conclusion. They are chiefly these three, "the grave," "the pit," and "Hell" or "Hades," corresponding to the Hebrew "Sheol," and on no account to be confounded with "Gehenna" the place where the wicked are finally, and, it is to be feared, everlastinglly punished. In our present authorised version, this Hebrew word is also unhappily rendered by the English word "Hell," and as one of those mistakes which have caused great confusion of thought upon this whole subject, it calls urgently for correction.

Now it is remarkable that the idea of a "descent" or "going down" is common to each of these expressions. We read, *e.g.*, how Jacob, supposing that his darling Joseph had been devoured by wild beasts, refused to be comforted, and said, "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning."

So Hannah, in her prayer, speaks of the Lord as "bringing *down* to the grave," and "bringing up."

In that weird story of the witch of Endor,

contained in 1 Sam. xxviii., the woman, in answer to the questions of the affrighted king—as to whom she saw—declares, “I saw gods,” or rather, “god-like shapes *ascending out of the earth*”; moreover, the spirit of Samuel thus addresses Saul, “Why hast thou disquieted me *to bring me up?*”

The word “pit,” in this sense, first occurs in the book of Numbers, xvi. 30. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram had provoked the Lord by questioning the authority of Moses and Aaron, and by impiously daring to usurp the priestly prerogatives. Hearken to the horrible doom which befell these “sinners against their own souls.” It was thus pronounced by the lips of Moses at God’s command, “Hereby,” he said, “ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men, then the Lord hath not sent me; but if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and *they go down quick into the pit*, then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord: and it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth

go there until the resurrection. Isaiah, for example, is commanded to take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, the great destroyer, whom the Lord should Himself at last destroy : “ How hath the oppressor ceased ! . . . he who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke, he that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, and none hindereth : *hell* from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming : it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth : all they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we ? art thou become like unto us ? ”

Even Christ’s human spirit descended thither, during those brief thirty hours, whilst His body lay in the grave. Not, however, to remain there, as the Psalmist had foretold : “ Thou shalt not leave my soul in *hell*, neither shalt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” On this passage, and on those of Eph. iv. 10, and 1 Pet. iii. 19—though the meaning of both these latter admits of dispute—is founded that clause of the Apostles’ Creed, “ He descended into hell,” to which some pious souls, from ignorance of the true sense of the word, have taken groundless exception. Let it once be distinctly understood that “ *hell* ” here denotes “ the abode of the dead,” and not the woeful

place of the damned, after the final judgment; and the doctrine, as resting on the firm basis of Holy Writ, must command the assent of all Christian people.

Passing from the Old to the New Testament, and bearing carefully in mind that our inquiry still relates to the *place* where the blessed dead await the resurrection, what do we find? We find it there spoken of under two, and only two names, "Abraham's bosom" and "Paradise." From both of these, strange to say, the cheerless and gloomy notions attaching to the expressions we have previously considered have disappeared. They are suggestive of *peace* and *happiness*, of *light* and *life*, instead of darkness and silence as heretofore. They would almost seem to justify the opinion of certain of the early Christian writers, adopted by some eminent modern divines, that the state of the faithful dead underwent a wondrous change for the better, after Christ's coming.

The first of these two expressions, "Abraham's bosom," occurs, as you will remember, in our Lord's parable of Dives and Lazarus. This, I believe to be our main and most trustworthy source of knowledge concerning the intermediate

state of the soul between death and judgment. I have not the least sympathy with those who affirm that our Saviour was, in this place, merely accommodating His language to the popular mode of thought, which originated in the traditions of the Rabbis. If indeed He adopted their ideas, it was, I hold, because their ideas, whencesoever derived, expressed the *truth* of the matter. The above supposition appears to me to savour of blasphemy, since it exposes our Redeemer to the charge of hypocrisy at the least. Such a method of casuistry and "reserve" might well become the Jesuits, but is utterly unworthy of Him "who knew no sin, neither was *deceit* found in His mouth."

What is a parable? The well-worn definition, "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning," though true, is inadequate, and would hardly justify the use I propose to make of this divine form of instruction. I premise, therefore, that the parables of Christ *never* refer to what is, in itself, incredible or impossible. From His lips, "full of grace," nothing but the truth, actual or potential, could issue. Analyse, if you please, any or all those sacred utterances which do not relate to matters *above human experience*—like this

of Dives and Lazarus—and you will invariably find that they refer either to the *real* or to the *possible*. Sometimes they appear to be genuine historical facts¹ with a thin veil of allegory thrown over them; sometimes they are events of common life which were continually happening. Never, as far as I can recollect, are they, like fairy stories, mere creatures of an exuberant imagination. Moreover, they are *always* designed to teach important spiritual lessons, some of which our Lord Himself deigns to unfold, whilst leaving many more to our reverent discovery and application.

Thus much may suffice to vindicate the conclusions regarding the future life which I shall draw in the course of this work from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. This parable was uttered in a rebuke of the worldliness, the pride, and the covetousness of the Pharisees. Our Lord was in deepest earnest, and His language could therefore only be the sober truth. The scene of this solemn narrative is laid in hell—that is, Hades—the unseen dwelling of departed spirits. This is represented to us, as divided into two parts, between which the “great gulf fixed” forms

¹ *Vide* Archbishop Trench on the Parable of “the pounds,” p. 501.

an impassable barrier. On the one side, which is nameless, was the rich man in torments. On the other, which is called "Abraham's bosom," was Lazarus, comforted.

The remaining expression "Paradise," having a history of its own, requires fuller discussion. It occurs first in that sweet promise made by Christ, as He hung upon the cross, to the dying yet repentant thief by His side. "Lord! remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom," was the man's faithful prayer: "Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," was his Saviour's gracious answer.

What and where is this Paradise?

The consideration of this interesting subject, which will necessarily be treated at some length, must be treated in a separate chapter.

CHAPTER V.

“PARADISE.”

LUKE XXIII. 43.

“And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.”

PARADISE—its probable locality and the nature of its joys—is the theme which is next to occupy our reverent attention. The history of this word, with its use in the Old Testament and in the language of Christ, has been ably traced, as follows.¹ “The word itself, though it occurs in ‘Song of Solomon,’ iv. 13, Eccl. ii. 5, Neh. ii. 8, may be classed with hardly a doubt as of Aryan rather than of Shemitic origin. It first appears in Greek, as coming straight from Persia. In Zenophon, the word is often found, and we get vivid pictures of the scene which it implied.

¹ Smith’s *Dictionary of the Bible*, under “Paradise.”

A wide open park, enclosed against injury, yet with its natural beauty unspoiled by art, with stately forest trees, many of them bearing fruit, watered by clear streams, on whose banks roved large herds of antelopes or sheep—this was the scenery which connected itself in the mind of the Greek traveller with the word *παράδεισος*, for which his own language supplied no precise equivalent. Through the writings of Zenophon and through the general admixture of orientalisms in the later Greek, after the conquests of Alexander, the word gained a recognised place in the language, and the writers of the Septuagint chose it for a new use which gave it a higher worth and secured for it a perennial existence."

"It is a matter of some interest to ascertain with what associations the word was connected in the minds of the Jews of Palestine at the time of our Lord's teaching—as helping to fix the sense attaching to it in the writings of the New Testament. The Rabbinic schools of Palestine had their descriptions, definite and detailed, of Paradise. It was with some supposed far off in the distant East, further than the foot of man had trod. With others, it was a region of the world of the dead—of Sheol, in the heart of the

earth. Gehenna was on one side, with its flames and torments ; Paradise on the other—the intermediate home of the blessed. With others again, Paradise was neither on the earth nor within it—but above it—in the third heaven, or in some higher orb."

From the foregoing summary of its history, we see that the ideas involved in the word, however various and indefinite, were uniformly ideas of shelter, peace, and joy. Such therefore must have been the expectation raised in the mind of the dying thief upon the cross by the words of Jesus, "this day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." They must have assured him that soon, the agony which racked his quivering frame would give place to a thrill of ineffable delight—that the burning thirst which tortured him would be exchanged for draughts of purest pleasure, and that, for bitterness and anguish of soul, he should ere long enjoy a sweet and calm repose. And, though the sensuous and material images of stately trees and luscious fruits and cooling streams which the Rabbis pictured to themselves, as forming part of the delights of Paradise, are not admissible into any just conception of the spirit-world, they at least help to strengthen our belief that

Paradise is, at all events, a beautiful, a joyous, and a peaceful place.

As regards its *locality*, David foretold that Christ's human spirit should go to Hades at his death; and since our Lord's own words assure us that He was then in Paradise, it follows almost inevitably that Paradise and Hades are one and the same, or at least—that part of Hades which in the parable of Dives and Lazarus is called “Abraham's bosom” and “Paradise” must be identical. *Hither, then, we may conclude, the souls of the righteous will go at death.* But whether it be in the bowels of the earth, as the indications in the Old Testament seem to show, or whether it be somewhere above the skies, as St. Paul's reference to it, coupled with the fact that *angels* carried Lazarus there, appears to require—who shall say?

Moreover we must not forget that, after all, “above” and “below” are not *absolute* but *relative* terms, conveying to the Antipodeans for instance and ourselves exactly *opposite* ideas. Chiefly we must remember that wherever God is, there His people may safely trust themselves. Go where we will, we cannot get beyond His reach, to curse or bless, to punish or protect us.

According as we are believers or unbelievers, should confidence or dismay possess our hearts when we ponder the Psalmist's sublime inquiry : “Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy Presence? If I climb up into heaven, Thou art there : if I make my bed in hell (Hades) Thou art there also : if I take the wings of the morning and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me.”

Finally it must be noted, that if, after death, the souls of the righteous, delivered from the burden of the flesh, soar towards heaven, the Lord will surely be there to receive them ; if, on the other hand, the spirit's path be downward, there is still no cause for fear. The eternal God “is still their Refuge” and “*underneath*” are “the everlasting arms.”

Fearlessly, then, let the righteous follow the Apostle's godly exhortation and “commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator.”

CHAPTER VI.

DEATH, TO THE RIGHTEOUS, THE GATE OF IMMORTALITY.

MARK XII. 27.

“He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.”

WE have now arrived at the second main division of our subject. The “*place where*” the souls of the righteous abide, between death and the general judgment, having been determined, with as much exactness as the nature of the inquiry and the few brief hints of Scripture, allowed, we pass to a consideration of the “*state in which*” the faithful dead are now awaiting their blessed resurrection. As the result of our investigation, the following propositions will, it is confidently hoped, be found established, not upon the data of human experience—for this is wholly wanting—nor yet upon the basis of human reasoning, for this is uncertain and deceptive, but upon

the foundation, sure and steadfast, of the revealed Word of God.

a. That the souls of the righteous in Paradise, whither they go immediately after death, are really and truly *alive*.

b. That so far from being steeped in *dreamless slumber*—as many suppose—their mental consciousness is unimpaired, or perhaps even more vigorous than it was on earth.

c. That their state is characteristically one of *repouse*, not being such, however, as to bar the exercise of their moral powers.

d. That their condition as disembodied spirits, though happy and peaceful, is *imperfect*.

e. That their chief source of happiness is derived from the more intimate *union and communion* which they then enjoy with their Lord.

Our first and second propositions may be termed “general,” inasmuch as they admit of application to the whole human race. Those which follow are “particular,” having reference only to those who depart this life in the faith and fear of God.

“The souls of the righteous in Paradise are really and truly alive.” The proof of this assertion may be made to rest upon several places of Scripture, but chiefly upon those of St. Mark,

xii. 27, and the parallel passages in St. Matthew and St. Luke. Our Lord was arguing with the subtle and sceptical Sadducees who ridiculed the doctrine of the resurrection and denied the existence of either angels or spirits. Having solved their hard and carnal objection about the woman who had seven husbands, He leaves them to their own meditations with this final word : "Now, that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he called the Lord, the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob ; for He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living." *Even* Moses showed this, not clearly or directly, but obscurely and by implication. It was reserved for a greater than Moses, even Christ Himself, to "bring life and immortality to light." Still, in speaking of God as the God of those old patriarchs, Moses virtually confessed his belief in the resurrection, for he confessed that he believed Abraham, though dead and gone from this world, to *exist* in another.

Besides, if we adopt the version of this part of the conversation, as given by the other evangelists, the proof of our thesis becomes still stronger. For there, we learn that it was not Moses, but God Himself, Who thus described

Himself. In the gospel according to St. Matthew our Lord says, "Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? Now certainly, it is implied, whatever the man Moses might do, God would not speak of Himself as the God of the dead *if they were non-existent*. "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living—for all live unto Him."

The same conclusion might be drawn from various other places of the Old Testament. If either the righteous or the wicked cease to be, at death, what sense can we make of the account of the appearance of holy Samuel's spirit before the affrighted Saul? How meaningless would be his prophetic denunciation of the wicked king: "The Lord will deliver Israel, with thee, into the hands of the Philistines, *and to-morrow thou and thy sons shall be with me.*"

Again, on what other supposition, save the continued existence of the godly beyond the grave, shall we explain those words of the Psalmist, "The expectation of the ungodly shall perish, but *the righteous hath hope in his death*"? "My flesh and my heart fail me, but God is the strength of my heart and *my portion for ever*"?

If the souls of men die with their bodies, our Saviour's parable of the rich man and Lazarus *reveals nothing and teaches nothing*. Those solemn asseverations of the Author and Finisher of our faith might well be laughed to scorn : "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me *shall never die*." "Verily, verily! I say unto you, if a man keep My saying, *he shall never see death*." Then, went not the penitent thief to Paradise, nor desperate and remorseful Judas "to his own place." Paul's expectation too must have perished. Having hope in Christ in this life only, he was indeed "of all men most miserable," and for him to die was *loss*, not *gain*. Such woeful suppositions refute themselves.

We conclude therefore on the most certain warranty of Holy Writ, that the souls of the righteous do *survive* their bodies and are now in Paradise.

Furthermore, as part of this first proposition, we affirm from Scripture, that their entrance into bliss follows *immediately upon their death*.

There is no intervening purgatorial flame, as the Papists, for power and filthy lucre's sake, do im-

piously pretend. The soul, that in the present life, has laid hold on Christ, and is justified by faith in the Redeemer's blood, needs no further cleansing, when it leaves this earth. Its guilty stains have already been washed away in that Fountain which is now open for all manner of sin and uncleanness. Whatsoever defilements it may have contracted in the midst of this miserable and naughty world,¹ through the lusts of the flesh or the wiles of Satan, are purged and done away at death, and it is presented pure and without spot before its Maker. These are bold assertions, says the adversary. Where are your proofs? In the armoury of Heaven,—in the treasure-house of God's Holy Word, I reply. To the Bible, therefore, let us go. What saith the Apostle to the Romans? "There is therefore *now* no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." If not *now*—is it conceivable that there should be *hereafter*? But we have greater witness than that of Paul, even that of his Lord and ours. "Verily, verily! I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but *is passed* from death unto life."

¹ Compare Commendatory Prayer in Service for Visitation of the Sick.

Observe!—the life which Christ gives to the believer is begun here, is unbroken by death, and continues throughout eternity.

The same blessed truth appears in our Saviour's promise to the penitent thief, "*This day* shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Not, a hundred or a thousand years hence, not even to-morrow; but, *to-day*. A like conclusion may be drawn from Stephen's dying prayer. As he sank to the ground beneath the stones of his murderers, with his face suffused by a celestial radiance, "as it had been the face of an angel," and with the eyes of his mind, now closing upon earth, open to the ineffable realities of Heaven, "he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right-hand of God." Then it was that he cried, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Can we suppose that He, who but a little while before commended His own spirit into His Father's hands, did not *at once* receive the spirit of His faithful servant into His holy keeping?

But some men will say, "We grant you this, yet, recollect! Stephen was the first of martyrs, and amongst the most illustrious of saints! To the 'noble army of martyrs' such a distinction may be conceded; but what claims have ordinary Christians—the mere 'rank and file' of believers—

to this high privilege?" The promise of their Saviour, Christ, I answer—made originally to His disciples, on the eve of His departure out of this world unto His Father, but intended, as may easily be proved, for all the faithful. In the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, at the 1st and following verses, it is written: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me: in My Father's house are many mansions (literally "abiding-places"): I go to prepare a place for you: and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also." That this promise cannot relate to the distant future, but must have had an early fulfilment, is evident. How else could it have comforted the troubled hearts of the disciples? What consolation could they derive from being told that after a very long period—say the time which has elapsed between then and now—their Lord would come again and fetch them from the darkness and dishonour of the grave to His own glorious abode?

On turning to the late Dean Alford's excellent commentary on the New Testament, I was glad to find this view confirmed. "This coming again,"

he says, “is *begun* in His resurrection, *carried on* in the spiritual life of His people—the making them ready for the place prepared; *further advanced* when each by death is fetched away to be with Him: fully completed at His coming in glory, when they shall ever be with Him, in the perfected resurrection state.” Moreover, that what Christ said unto them, He said unto all who are partakers of His grace, we may infer from the fact that upon his repentance, a *bandit*, who was probably an *assassin*¹ as well, was accounted worthy, immediately after death, to be with His Saviour where He was; that is, in Paradise.

Yet once again. If Paul, who had been a blasphemer and a persecutor—who reckoned himself to be “the chief of sinners”—had a desire to depart, this was that he might “be with Christ.” If he was “willing rather to be absent from the body,” this was because he knew that he should then be “present with the Lord.”

May not, therefore, my first proposition be taken as fully proved by Scripture, “That the souls of the righteous are really and truly *alive* in Paradise, whither they go *immediately* after death”?

¹ He was very likely one of the associates of Barabbas, “who had made insurrection and had committed murder in the insurrection.” — *Vide* Mark xv. 7.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ENLARGED CONSCIOUSNESS, MENTAL AND MORAL, OF THE RIGHTEOUS DEAD.

JOHN VIII. 56.

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day ; and he saw it, and was glad."

To pass now to my second proposition, "That the souls of the righteous after death, so far from being steeped in dreamless slumber, as many suppose, have their mental powers unimpaired, or perhaps even more vigorous than they were on earth."

Though the places of Scripture which concern this proposition are few in number, they are, I think, quite capable of bearing the weight of proof which I shall put upon them. The first is taken from the ninth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, which records our Saviour's transfiguration. "It came to pass," we read, "that He took Peter, John, and

James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistering, And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias." Now both Moses and Elias were "men subject to like passions as we are." If it be objected that Elias was a great prophet, and therefore hardly to be brought into comparison with ourselves, the answer is ; so was John the Baptist. Nay ! our Lord declares "that of those that were born of woman, there had not appeared a greater prophet than John the Baptist ; *and yet,*" He adds, "he which is least in the kingdom of Heaven"—the least, that is, of His true followers—"is greater than he." We need not hesitate, therefore, to call Elijah as one of our witnesses. If, however, it still be urged that Elijah was taken up into heaven without dying, so that his case is hardly to the point, no such objection can be brought against Moses. He, we know, died the common death of all men. Yet *both* are seen by the three favoured Apostles, bright with the reflected glory of the transfigured Christ. Both hold high converse with the world's Redeemer, touching the wondrous ransom He was soon to offer. For we are expressly told that "they spake of His decease

which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." Both these, therefore, we may be sure, though in another state of being, were *in full possession of their mental powers.*

The next witness I shall summon is Abraham. He, too, is undoubtedly "dead according to the flesh," yet, as we have already seen, he is as undoubtedly "quickened according to the spirit." Though gone from this world, he lives unto and with his God. In the eighth chapter of St. John's Gospel, we behold our blessed Lord exposed to the blasphemous "contradiction of sinners against Himself," yet calmly asserting His supreme title to the obedience and worship of every creature. The indignation of the unbelieving Jews reached its culminating point when He declared, "Verily, verily ! I say unto you, if a man keep My saying, he shall never see death." Though they could not fathom its sublimity, they feel instinctively that this was a boast which no mere mortal had a right to utter : hence their angry rejoinder, "Now we know that Thou hast a devil: Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and *Thou* sayest, 'If a man keep My saying he shall never see death.' Art Thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead ? and the prophets are dead : whom makest Thou

Thyself?" Jesus answered, "If I honour Myself, My honour is nothing: it is My Father that honoureth Me, of whom ye say that He is your God. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad." I am not ignorant that the usual interpretation of these words makes them mean simply that Abraham, *in his lifetime*, by faith, foresaw the blessings of the Gospel dispensation, and rejoiced to foresee them. But this I take to be a wholly inadequate explanation of our Saviour's language. For observe! these captious Jews *did* greatly err in supposing that Abraham was *dead* in the truest sense. He had kept the commandments of the Lord, which may be taken, for him, as equivalent to the "*sayings of Christ*," and, being justified by faith, *had not seen death*. I would, therefore, understand the words of Jesus in their literal and most obvious sense. Elijah, as we have read, and Moses, who had long since departed this life, spake with our Lord concerning the great work of man's salvation. Why, then, should it be thought incredible that Abraham, from his place in Paradise, should rejoice in beholding the earthly triumph of his Lord? Besides, there is a passage in the seventeenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, which may aptly be compared

with that we are considering : " And He said unto the disciples, The days will come when ye shall desire to see *one of the days of the Son of Man*, and shall not see it." Here the expression must be understood literally ; and if in one place, why not in the other ? Confidently, we infer that Abraham was at this time not only a living but a *sentient* being, in the full enjoyment both of moral and of mental consciousness.

Our argument acquires additional force when we come to the parable of Dives and Lazarus, in which Abraham once more appears. He who, on earth, was the " father of the faithful," and is styled pre-eminently " the friend of God," now appears in high place and dignity in the world of the departed. His mental faculties are in full vigour. His spiritual insight moreover would seem to be incalculably enlarged. He is conversant with the topography of Hades. He knows and willingly abides by the rules which are laid down by the Great Father of the spirits of all flesh for the governance of souls therein. He is not only cognisant of the past miserable estate of Lazarus—this he might have learned from his own lips—but he knows also the rich voluptuary's previous history, and recalls it to his mind. " Son ! remember, that

thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now, he is comforted and thou art tormented: and beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot: neither can they pass to us that would come from thence." Does not all this imply a vast accession of knowledge, though none can tell how acquired ?

Yet once more. The spirit of Samuel is called up by the unholy incantations of the witch of Endor from the nether-world. The gift of prophecy, which he possessed in this life, has not been taken from him. He first expostulates with Saul for disturbing his peaceful repose: "Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?" And Saul answered, "I am sore distressed, for the Philistines make war upon me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams, therefore I have called thee that thou mayest make known to me what I shall do." Then said Samuel, "Wherefore dost thou ask of me, seeing the Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? And the Lord hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the Lord hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy

neighbour, even to David." He then foretells that Israel shall be defeated, and that Saul and his two sons shall join him on the following day in his mysterious abode. "Moreover, the Lord will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines, and to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me."

What further proof is needed to confirm the certainty of the second proposition here advanced? "The souls of the righteous after death, so far from being steeped in dreamless slumbers, as many suppose, have their mental powers unimpaired, or perhaps even more vigorous than they were on earth."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE REST THAT REMAINETH FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

ISAIAH LVII. 2.

"He shall enter into peace : they shall rest in their beds : each one walking in his uprightness."

I HAVE now arrived at the third proposition, which runs thus :—"The state of the souls of the righteous, in Paradise, is characteristically one of *repose*, not being such, however, as to bar the exercise of their moral powers." In support of this thesis, my first appeal shall be to the text which stands in the forefront of this chapter. Here, that holy man of old, the prophet Isaiah, not speaking the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but moved by the Holy Ghost, declares, that the souls of the righteous after death "shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness."

But for a few isolated passages like this, the impression left upon the mind of any one who has carefully searched the scriptures of the Old Testament, in order to discover the state of the faithful dead, must be, that they are lying somewhere beyond reach of harm, in a condition of peaceful and semi-conscious repose. Of *vivid joys* or *active energies*, he would say, I find no trace. Indeed Job's exquisitely pathetic picture would seem to disclose all that can be known of their state on this side of the grave. In the bitterness of his soul he complains:¹ "Why died I not from the womb? Why did the knees prevent me? or the breasts that I should suck? for now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept; then had I been at rest, with kings and counsellors of the earth, which built desolate places (*sc.* "sepulchres") for themselves; or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver: there, the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary be at rest; there, the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor; the small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master."

Even the charge given by the angel to Daniel at

¹ Job iii. 12—19.

the close of his visions, contains but a dim hope of something more than “repose” for the souls of the righteous in the intermediate state. “Go thou thy way till the end be, for thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.”

No sooner, however, do we come to the New Testament than the prospect of futurity expands and brightens. The brief glimpses vouchsafed us behind the curtain which separates Time from Eternity—the world that now is, from that which is to come—reveal far more than mere repose for the departed saints of God.

The dead beggar, Lazarus, now has his “good things” in the blissful part of Hades, and is “comforted.” Far more than simple repose, even “joy and felicity” are implied in the Saviour’s cheering words to the dying malefactor who hung by His side: “To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.”

At the transfiguration, Elijah and Moses appear, not as cold, inert, and gloomy phantoms, but as warm and vivid realities. They speak and are spoken to. Encouragement, sympathy, admiration; each of these distinct moral phases of feeling is almost necessarily involved in the subject of the conversation which they hold with Christ, concerning His decease, which He was to accomplish at

Jerusalem. They are clearly come, not from a land of silence and darkness, where all things are forgotten, but from some bright sphere of light, not far removed from God and heaven. For "they appeared in glory," says one of the evangelists. Again, it is surely a reasonable conjecture that, what they then talked of with our Lord had been, often before, the topic of their adoring contemplation, and would be, after their spirits had returned to that happy land from whence they were for a brief space come forth. Moses, the servant of God, had in his lifetime been "faithful" in all his house; with what humble, yet sympathetic joy, would he follow the earthly career of Him who was "counted worthy of more glory than himself?" as being not a servant, but the only-begotten Son of God, the Builder of His house, the Church! How would Elijah, the rugged and undaunted prophet of Israel, rejoice, as he watched the going forth of the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" conquering and to conquer! Truly, if these blessed spirits were gladdened by the view of the *speedy* accomplishment by Christ of man's redemption, they must have rejoiced with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, when the death-cry—"It is finished"—of the expiring Son of Man reached their ears, and they knew that the great

Sacrifice was offered, reconciliation made for iniquity, and "everlasting Righteousness" brought in.

Yet, if more convincing testimony than this be desired, as to the moral activity and conscious happiness of the faithful dead, it is to be found, written in characters which he who runs may read, both in the saying of Isaiah, which forms my text, and in that most comfortable verse contained in the book of the Revelation : "They shall rest in their beds," saith the prophet, "each one walking in his uprightness." Now listen to the answering echo from the latest of the voices of Inspiration : "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord ! Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

Let us ponder these passages in their natural order. Isaiah leads the way with the assurance, "They shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness." What a startling paradox ! What a blessed contradiction ! "They *rest*"— "each one *walking* in his uprightness." How shall we reconcile these seeming contraries ? The truth seems to be, that *moral*, not physical rest, is here intended. Even in this our troublesome world, let but the conscience be at peace with its God, and all the other faculties of the soul move so

harmoniously, that labour becomes a pleasure, and duty a delight. Whatever be the turmoil around him, he, whose soul is stayed on God, is kept in perfect peace. May not this fact of our spiritual experience here, help to the solution of the apparent contradiction in the text? Besides, the spirit's rest in Paradise is *elsewhere* declared, not to be inconsistent with the exercise of its devout energies. In one place it is written, "His servants shall serve Him day and night in His temple;" nevertheless, we read also this promise, "Him that overcometh will I make a *pillar* in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out."

To harmonise these discrepancies, we have only to suppose that the blessed dead rest indeed from their earthly labours, which were often a weariness both to the flesh and spirit, yet apply themselves unceasingly, and without fatigue, to the delightful employments which God finds for them. What these may be we cannot tell. We know, however, that His great universe affords scope and verge enough for the utmost energies of the redeemed. Some of them are *already* discharging the sublime ministries of the upper sanctuary. Though it be an enigma which defies all our unravelling, we are plainly told, for instance, that the angel, or rather

"messenger," who had it in charge to show St. John his visions, was a *kindred spirit*, who, like himself, had once been a partaker of flesh and blood on this lower earth. For, when the Apostle fell at his feet and was about to worship him, he forbade this homage, saying, "See thou do it not ; for I am thy fellow-servant, *and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book*—worship God."

Let me now direct your attention exclusively to the final clause of the text. "Each one walking in his uprightness." The exact meaning of the original Hebrew words is somewhat doubtful. They denote, apparently, that the spirits of the just, even in their disembodied state, are not found *naked*, like those of the wicked, but are invested with righteousness, as it were with a garment. If this is their meaning, they may be compared with what Job said concerning himself : "I *put on* righteousness, and it *clothed* me ; my judgment was as a robe and a diadem." Or again, with that prophecy of Isaiah, touching the Lord's Anointed : "Righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and Faithfulness the girdle of His reins." Or yet, once more, with the prophet's glorious anticipation of future blessedness : "I will greatly

rejoice in the Lord : *my soul* shall be joyful in my God : for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation. He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." They have, however, been rendered by a competent scholar as "walking straightforward." At any rate, there is no doubt that "moral rectitude" is indicated. In the Scriptures of truth, the "*way of holiness*" is always spoken of as a *straight path*. Here, therefore, it is distinctly revealed that *character does not die*—the righteous shall be righteous still ; the unjust, unjust still. Indeed, if only this latter proposition can be established, the former is its inevitable complement. If the wicked do not cease to be wicked when they die, how should the upright be divorced from their uprightness? Those old rhymes, albeit mere doggrel, are thoroughly scriptural :—

"As the tree falls so shall it lie,
As the man lives so shall he die,
As the man dies so shall he be
All through the days of eternity."

There exists, however, a pernicious and widely-spread error, to the effect that, somehow or other, a radical change in men's dispositions may be

expected at death. The lively oracles of God nowhere sanction, nay, they flatly contradict this delusive supposition. They plainly declare that *actions* repeated, engender *habits*, and that habits are formed for eternity. Though my present aim is not so much to "warn the unruly" as to "support the weak" and to be a humble helper of the faith and joy of my brethren, it will, I trust, not be found irrelevant, if I bid you fix your gaze for a little while, on the dark, ere we turn again to the bright side of the picture. I say then, that it is a most pernicious error to suppose that our characters will undergo a radical change when we die. To the law and to the testimony! What saith the Scripture? Hear the voice of the Lord speaking by Isaiah: "Let favour be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly and will not behold the majesty of the Lord." Now I take it for granted that this "land of uprightness" is not to be discovered in *our* maps. It forms part of the shores of eternity, not of time. It is that bright land beyond the grave whose inhabitants are all *righteous*. There, nothing that is unclean or defiled, that worketh abomination or maketh a lie, can possibly exist. There, indeed,

the spirits of the just are *perfected* but not *recreated*. The new-birth takes place here below, the incorruptible seed of the Word must have been sown and taken root in our hearts in this life, if it is ever to attain its full beauty and maturity in the life to come. Earth is our training-school for the skies. If Dives could have passed to "Abraham's bosom" he would still have been what he was before. If the drunkard were lodged in Paradise, he would still crave for his cups; the impure would still be tormented by his lusts; the thief would retain his thievish propensities; the liar would still be false; the unjust would be unjust still; "in the land of uprightness he would deal unjustly, and would not behold the majesty of the Lord." Heaven itself would be no heaven to such as these, for they would be "their own hell," as our poet Milton has grandly and truly said: "Without holiness no man can see the Lord." The vision of the All-holy would be, to impenitent sinners, intolerable. Instead of gladdening, healing, comforting, it would terrify and blast them like the lightning, which is itself a faint image of the tremendous glory and power of God. Only those who seek His face here below shall bear to see Him as He is hereafter. Our God is a

"consuming fire;" yet the righteous will be as safe in His presence, as were the three children of old in Nebuchadnezzar's seven-times heated furnace. "Who among us," exclaims the prophet, "shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? *He that walketh righteously* and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil ; he shall dwell on high."

As death leaves us, judgment will find us, for weal or woe. The life to come is a continuation, though under altered circumstances, both as regards ourselves and our surroundings, of the life that now is. If we have done wickedly *here*, we shall still do—or desire to do—wickedly *there*. If, on the other hand, like patient Job, we have held fast our integrity whilst we lived, death will not relax our grasp. This precious appanage will still be ours. When we have passed through the valley of the dark shadow we shall go on our way rejoicing, and shall still "walk uprightly."

Say I this as a man, or saith not the word of God the same? Assuredly it does, and that in other places besides the text. Here, for example,

is one: "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The truth of my present contention, though not expressed, lies hidden in these words. For the "perfect day" of entire holiness—of realised faith—of all-embracing charity, is certainly not to be looked for on this side eternity. Yet that it reaches its meridian splendour by *successive* stages, is evidently signified by this beautiful metaphor. What room is there then for *a long night* of darkness, extending, as some imagine, from the hour of death until the Day of Judgment? The only supposition which tallies with this fair picture is that the souls of the "just" or "righteous" attain the full ripeness of their moral powers at or after death. "At evening time it shall be light." When Nature's sad decays have almost done their work upon the outer man, the inner man—in that which is not corruptible—shall be strengthened and renewed so much the more continually with God's grace and holy Spirit. "The righteous is an *everlasting* foundation." The inevitable shock of bodily dissolution shall not move him. The gates of hell shall not prevail against him. The final and fearful cataclysm of universal nature shall find and

leave him standing, yea, '*walking* in his up-rightness.' ”

Suffer, I beseech you, dear reader, the Apostle's word of exhortation. Seeing that this is your confidence : “ Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.”

I have kept my best—because the clearest and most convincing testimony—till the last. It is that encouraging verse from the book of the Revelation which, as I have said, affords the strongest confirmation of the truth of the doctrine in the text : “ Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord : yea ! saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and their works do follow them.” Of the meaning of these words, I am constrained to confess I had the vaguest and most inadequate ideas until quite recently, when I examined them in detail. I saw indeed at a glance that they contained a most comfortable doctrine, but I had no notion of the fulness and richness of the consolation which they minister to the humble believer. My Greek Testament first opened my eyes to their hidden beauties : “ Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.” Why

"blessed," methought! in the general sense of being partakers of the Divine favour—they must needs be, as united to Christ the Lord in life and in death. On turning to the original, I found that the word used was the same as that employed by Christ in His beatitudes on the mount. This, as is well known, would be better translated "happy." It is a good classical word, and was in use amongst the pagan poets and philosophers to express the perfect joy and felicity of the immortal gods. The *verb* formed from it signifies to "congratulate as happy." And since the same idea may be reasonably thought immanent in the *adjective*, we may conclude, I think, that in this place the faithful dead are not only declared to be happy, but are felicitated on this their happy estate.

But further, whose is this voice which is here heard? Apparently, it is the voice of the angel who revealed these visions to St. John. Yet, that our faith might rest on the firmest possible basis, this angelic utterance is solemnly ratified and confirmed by the Spirit of Truth Himself. "Yea!" saith the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." This last clause I acknowledge wholly to have misunderstood. I took "labours" and "works" to mean the same thing. Whereas the first denotes only

"wearisome labour," "toil," "trouble," "travail." The second expresses those "good works" which the grace of God enables His servants to perform. Then as to their works "following" them—I had hitherto supposed the best commentary on this saying was to be found in that of St. Paul in his first Epistle to Timothy, v. 24: "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they *follow after*: likewise the good works of some are manifest beforehand, and they that are otherwise cannot be hid." But here again I was altogether on the wrong track. For this mistake our authorised version, whose accuracy and beauty is for the most part above praise, was to blame. Instead of "*following*," the Greek declares that their works "*go along with*" or "*escort*" them. Surely this gives quite a different complexion to the revelation, and brings it, I apprehend, into closest harmony with that of Isaiah in my text. In both, continued existence, peace, happiness, *holy activity*, are attributed to the blessed dead.

Thus, the third proposition may, I trust, be taken as proved. "The state of souls in Paradise is characteristically one of repose, not being such, however, as to bar the exercise of their moral powers."

CHAPTER IX.

“THE INCOMPLETENESS OF THE DISEMBODIED SOUL.”

2 CORINTHIANS V. 4

“For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened : not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.”

My argument concerning the state of the souls of the righteous after death has now reached its penultimate stage, and the proposition I shall next essay to demonstrate is the following : “*The condition of the souls of the righteous between death and the general resurrection, though happy and peaceful, is imperfect.*” The “peace and happiness” which is their assured portion, when they depart this life, has been amply discussed in the preceding pages. In what respects, then, we have now to inquire, must their state be regarded as *incomplete* ?

God, the Great First Cause, is a Spirit, without body, parts or passions;¹ but man, His creature, is a composite being, made up of body and soul. It needs no argument to prove that the soul is the higher and nobler part of man. The mere fact that the soul can exist without the body, whilst the body cannot exist without the soul, furnishes conclusive evidence of its intrinsic superiority. Still if the body, when disjoined from the soul, is but a dead lump of clay, the soul stripped of its earthly vesture, must at any rate be regarded as less than—and inferior to—its former self. It seems only reasonable to assume that a sense of physical deprivation and loss attaches to it in its disembodied state: and that the deductions of reason agree with the testimony of inspiration, the words of the Apostle in the text appear to show. “For we,” he says, “that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, *not that we would be unclothed*, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” The double metaphor here employed, which likens the body, now to a tabernacle or tent—which is but a flimsy structure, easily pulled to pieces—now to a garment or vesture, to be put on and off—has been

¹ Compare first Article of the Church of England.

thus ingeniously accounted for : "This mingling of the figures of a tent and a garment may have been caused by Paul's familiarity with the Cilician materials used in tent-making. Sometimes these were of skins, which were suggestive of the human body, often called by the Greeks, 'a tent ;' sometimes they were of hair-cloth, which was almost equally suggestive of a habitation and of a vesture." The first question to which the text gives rise, is this :

What was the burden which made the Apostle groan, whilst in his earthly tabernacle ? Was it not that clogging *weight* of sin which doth so "easily beset" the holiest of the children of men ; which is so hard entirely to "cast aside," and which wrung that agonizing cry even from his strong soul : "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death" ? Again ; was it not that enormous burden of care and anxiety which impelled him on more than one occasion to the plaintive confession that he was "pressed out of measure, above strength" ? Was it not, lastly, that almost unexampled weight of sufferings which he bore so bravely, seeking his sole earthly assuagement in pouring his tale of woe into the sympathising ears of his beloved

converts? “I think that God hath set forth us the Apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless: being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the earth, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.” No wonder therefore if the Apostle “groaned, being burdened”! No wonder—if he earnestly longed for the time when the only weight he would have to bear, would be that “eternal weight of glory,” which is the heritage of all the saints.

Why then, it may be asked, did he not desire to be “unclothed,” that is, to die? This was not because the putting off his earthly tabernacle was in itself undesirable; for he says a little further on, “therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent (lit. “away from home”) from the Lord.” For we walk by faith, not by sight. “We are confident,” I say, “and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”

Moreover he assures the Philippians that he has "a desire to depart and to be with Christ, *which is far better.*" There can be no doubt therefore that he meant what he said, when he declared that, although, for him to live was Christ, yet to ~~die~~ was *gain*. If now he desires not to be unclothed, this was because there was something even more desirable on which his hopes were fixed, and that was the second coming of Christ, when, those of His people who were alive and remained, would not be "unclothed," but "clothed upon." Then, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, this mortal would put on immortality and death would be swallowed up in victory." What therefore he desired, even more than death, was the immediate putting on of his spiritual body, fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body—his building of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

I find too, in the graphic language here employed an expressive hint of the *natural imperfection*, of that purely spiritual existence upon which the souls of the righteous enter at death. He speaks of being "at home" in the body. Even when "with Christ," he will still be, as far as the body

is concerned, "away from home." The body has been the soul's inseparable companion during its earthly pilgrimage. They have got so used to one another—if we may so speak—that when the inevitable parting comes, the soul must needs feel a certain sense of estrangement and loss under the new conditions of its being. It feels probably, as one might, who is obliged to leave the dear familiar scenes of childhood for a foreign land, where everything, albeit bright and beautiful, is new and strange.

Since however, in this life, the body has shared with the soul its struggles, dangers, and temptations, it is very meet and right that it should also be partaker of its final and everlasting reward. And this, the word of inspiration tells us, it shall be : for "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality." But, until this consummation is attained at the general resurrection, the state of the soul apart from the body must be a state of *incompleteness*.

I have still stronger arguments to urge in favour of this proposition. When our Saviour Christ arose from death and ascended to His mediatorial throne, "He took again His body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of

man's nature.¹ Now since we know that He was made in all points like unto His brethren, sin only excepted, and are further assured that they who do the will of the Father shall be refashioned after His glorious likeness, it follows, that until this promise is realized, their condition must be one of *imperfection*.

Yet once more: The union of believers with Christ is said to be so vital and entire, that even marriage, the most intimate of human connections, is only a type or shadow of this divine relationship. "As the husband is the head of the wife, so is Christ the head of the Church," "for we," adds the Apostle, "*are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.*" Without controversy this is a great mystery; yet accepting it as such, we must acknowledge that until this union—which even now is *real*, though *incomprehensible* and *invisible*—is made *visible*, as it will be at the resurrection, the condition of the souls of the righteous after death is *imperfect*.

It must next be noted for our comfort, that this "*bodily incompleteness*," does not appear to involve as its consequence any *moral imperfection*. On the contrary, the work of grace begun in

¹ *Vide Article IV. of the Church of England.*

our hearts by God the Holy Ghost and carried on progressively whilst we live, would seem to reach its climax at death, when we shall be wholly sanctified. Else, what meaneth that exhortation of the Apostle James: "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be *perfect, entire, wanting nothing*"? Seeing that the persecutions to which the Apostle alludes, only ceased, as a rule, with the *life* of the martyrs, patience could not have her perfect work until their death, when, like their great Forerunner, Jesus, they would be made *perfect* through suffering. Wherefore also St. Peter, at the close of his second epistle, offers up this prayer for his afflicted brethren: "The God of all grace, who hath called us into His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, *make you perfect*." Again, the writer to the Hebrews, commanding the New Testament, or Gospel Dispensation, above the Old, says distinctly, "Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to *the spirits of just men made perfect*."

Yet once more—in this same epistle, whilst the Law, having only a shadow of good things to come, is declared to have been quite unable to make the comers thereunto *perfect*, our blessed Saviour, by His one offering once offered, is said to have "*perfected for ever them that are sanctified*." It would appear then, that the condition of the souls of the righteous between death and the general resurrection, though morally perfect, is physically incomplete.

CHAPTER X.

THE SOVEREIGN JOY OF PARADISE.

PHILIPPIANS I. 23.

"Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ ; which is far better."

THE last proposition set down for consideration is this : "The chief source of the happiness of the souls of the righteous in Paradise is derived from the more intimate union and communion which they then experience with their Lord."

This is quite the sovereign joy of all those which await the faithful dead in the intermediate state. The expectation which they have of it rests upon the sure word of God, which, like His Church, is herein "the pillar and ground of the truth." May a careful scrutiny of the verse which heads this chapter, and of one or two others of like import, confirm our faith in this most blessed revelation !

When the epistle to the Philippians was written, St. Paul was undergoing his first imprisonment at Rome. Though himself a captive, he had the happiness of knowing that the word of God was not bound, and that his bonds were rather profitable than otherwise to the cause of the gospel. "I would," he says at the twelfth verse, "that ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace" (lit. "prætorium," the camp of the imperial body-guard, near which the Apostle seems to have been confined), "and in all other places." One of the chief desires of his heart was now fulfilled, for he was able to "preach the gospel at Rome also," the capital of the ancient world. "A great door" of usefulness was opened to him, and there were "many adversaries." Nevertheless, his long career of suffering began to tell, even on his undaunted spirit; so that though he was willing, if the Lord willed, to continue his labours, he yet sometimes yearned for his everlasting reward. "I am in a strait," he says, "betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better; nevertheless to abide in the

flesh is more needful for you." "I am in a strait" (lit. "I am held together by the two").¹ "As in his body he was at this time probably held a prisoner between two soldiers, to whom he was bound by two chains, so, in his mind, he was held in a strait betwixt two contending impulses."

"Having a desire"—rather *the* desire—"to depart, and to be with Christ." "To depart:" this is, in the original, a seaman's word, meaning to "weigh anchor and set sail." So, the Apostle longed to loose from the shores of earth, and to make a quick passage to the haven of eternal rest.

"Which is far better." This is but a tame rendering of the Greek, which is a double comparative, expressive of the *vast superiority* of "being with Christ" over all earthly companionship.

But enough of verbal criticism! Let me try and tell of some of the ingredients that fill the exhaustless cup of joy which the departed saints now drink in Paradise. They are indeed all *combined* in those few words "to be with Christ." Be it mine to *separate* them for our mutual edification!

¹ Compare Wordsworth *in loco*.

See what a bright vista of blessedness opens up before the eye of the believer! When he departs, he goes straightway to be with Christ. The Lord is with His people *now*; though the gross eye of sense perceives Him not, according to His promise, "Lo! I am with you always, *even unto the end of the world.*" Already, their truest, highest life, is "hid with Christ in God," and the life which they now live in the flesh, they live by the faith of the Son of God." Yet, how hardly can the best of them realize these heavenly verities! Even true faith is so weak-eyed that she cannot always "see afar off." But soon, "*believing*" shall be transformed into "*seeing*," and the redeemed shall actually "behold the King in His beauty." To the unbelieving Jews, whilst He went in and out amongst them, Christ had "no form nor comeliness, no beauty that they should desire Him." But to those whose hearts were tender—to those whose eyes were not holden, He appeared, even in the body of His humiliation, "fairer than the children of men," "*beautiful amongst ten thousand,*" yea! "*altogether lovely.*"

Hear what the beloved disciple thought of Christ! He who of all others knew Him best,

—who leaned upon His bosom at the Last Supper, bare record, saying, “The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, and we beheld His glory—the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” If, “in the form of a servant,” He looked so fair—how ineffably radiant will He appear in Paradise, as the King of saints and Lord of glory!

It was “*good*” for His disciples to be with Him at His transfiguration—though this was momentary—must it not be “*far better*” to be with Him and to see Him now, when no intervening “shadow of the cross” can dim His native and essential majesty?

He Himself seems to have rejoiced in the anticipation of their adoring wonder, when in His prayer to the Father, before He suffered, He ejaculates : “Father! I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with Me where I am, that *they may behold My glory*, which Thou hast given me.”

Did not the hearts of the two disciples journeying to Emmaus, on the morning of Christ’s resurrection, “burn within them,” as He talked with them by the way, and expounded unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning Himself, though

they knew Him not? Surely a holier and more ardent flame will fire the spirits of the just in Paradise, when they hold free communication with their Lord, and when He shall see them, not, as it were, "by the way," but shall abide with them for ever!

I shall not, I think, be liable to the reproach of "darkening counsel by words without knowledge," if I even hazard a conjecture, as to some of the subjects of their high converse. St. Peter tells us, in mysterious yet explicit terms, that the Spirit of Christ, during the thirty hours of His sojourn in Hades, went and preached to the spirits of the *disobedient antediluvians*.¹ How untiring and beneficent may His working be expected to be now, on behalf of His saints who have been *faithful unto death*! How glorious and manifold may be the revelations He vouchsafes them of Himself, "in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge!" Whilst He was on earth, He had yet many things to say to his simple followers, which they could not then bear. May not the awful contemplation of these mysteries of the Kingdom of God form part, at least, of their happy employ in Paradise?

¹ 1 Peter iii. 19, 20.

"If therefore," and in this case St. Paul's *supposition* implies the most absolute *certainty*, and is equivalent to the strongest affirmation, "if there be any consolation in Christ, any comfort of love, any fellowship of the Spirit," it was "far better" for him "to depart, and to be with Christ." To him indeed, "to live was Christ, yet to die was gain." In this life, he was but "following after," "going on unto perfection," running with patience and with pain the race set before him. He had not yet attained the goal. At death, his course would be finished with joy, and the crown of everlasting righteousness and life, secured. *Here*, he had suffered the *loss* of all things, and counted them but dung that he might *win* Christ : *there*, the object of his incessant strivings, his prayers and tears and daily sacrifices, would be *gained*. Christ would be his, and he would be Christ's. So great was the gain of dying to the Apostle, and such doubtless, according to their several spiritual capacities, will be the gain of *all* faithful souls at death.

But, some one may perhaps insist, the dead are said to be *asleep*; how can they then experience such vivid joys as you describe? They are indeed, I answer, said to be asleep; yet observe how

widely different are the ideas awakened by the words "sleeping in death," and "sleeping in Jesus." In the former case, a chill, heavy, perhaps troubled sleep suggests itself to our minds. From the latter expression, even an untutored fancy would picture a far brighter prospect. Visions, perchance, of some innocent child, would be called up, slumbering in a fond parent's arms, a gentle smile just curving its lips, and telling plainly of pleasant dreams and sweet repose. But the Bible, as we have seen, speaks continually of the faithful dead as *alive* unto God, "satisfied with His likeness," "walking in their uprightness." We doubt not, therefore, but earnestly believe, that the souls of them that *sleep in Jesus*, enjoy, in Paradise, perpetual felicity.

There can, I maintain, be no danger of *semi-vitality* or *partial consciousness* for those who are in the immediate Presence of Him, Who was made a *Quickening Spirit*, Who is Himself "the Life," and Who came, not only that we might have life, but that we might have it *more abundantly*. There can be no fear of drowsy apathy or unsatisfied aspirations for those who are with Him, Who is "the Brightness of the Father's glory," and "in Whom dwelleth all the Fulness of the Godhead bodily."

The *details* of the Saints' future blessedness are not revealed, but that the foregoing description is a faithful *outline* of them, drawn from the lively oracles of God, cannot be denied. Now, indeed, those whose vision is most purged, see through a glass, darkly. They know in part, and they can only prophesy in part. Let this be our comfort, that, what we know not now, we shall know hereafter.

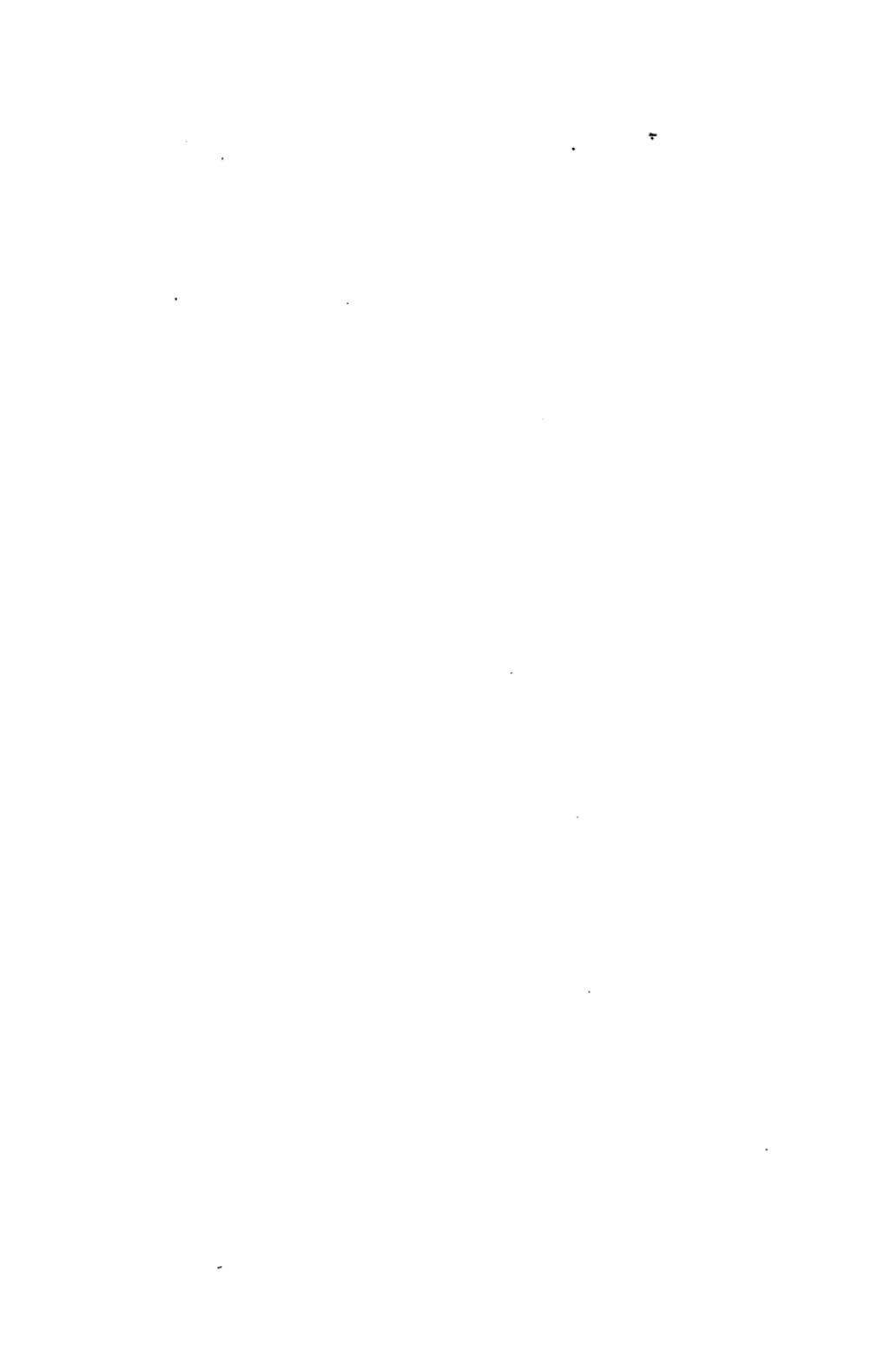
Besides, those who have to wait longest for this perfect knowledge, will not have to wait long. "Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up and is cut down like a flower ; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay." "We spend our years as a tale that is told, and there is none upon earth abiding." There is no need to embitter the *innocent* joys of time, which God has given us, by gloomy reflections on our own mortality ; but one thing is needful, and that is, that we all, without delay, choose that good part which shall not be taken from us. There *is* need that we seek *first* the kingdom of God and His Righteousness,—that is—Christ the Lord. There is need that we should learn *now*, while our day of grace remaineth, to set our *best* affections upon

things above, that so, amid all the changes and chances of this mortal life, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where alone true joys are to be found.

May you, dear reader, and I, ponder well, and faithfully fulfil this solemn, this momentous obligation !

“ Life is real, life is earnest,
And the grave is not its goal ;
‘ Dust thou art—to dust returnest,’
Was not spoken of the soul.”

I know not a more beautiful and touching prayer—and herewith I will make an end—than that of Baxter, in his *Heavenly Meditation on the Saints' Rest*. “ Indeed, Lord, my soul is in a strait, and what to choose I know not, but Thou knowest what to give. To depart and be with Thee is far better. Thou knowest that I am not weary of Thy work, but of sorrow and sin : I am willing to stay while Thou wilt employ me, and despatch the work Thou hast put into my hands ; but I beseech Thee, stay no longer when this is done, and while I must be here, let me be still amending and ascending. *Make me still better, and take me at the best.*”



SECTION IV.

*SECONDARY PROBABILITIES, DERIVED FROM
SCRIPTURE, TOUCHING THE STATE AND
PLACE OF THE SOULS OF THE RIGHTEOUS,
BETWEEN DEATH AND THE GENERAL
RESURRECTION.*

CHAPTER XI.

RECOGNITION AND AFFECTION.

GENESIS XV. 15.

“And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace.”

I CORINTHIANS XIII. 8.

“Charity never faileth.”

“IT is probable, *in the highest degree*, that in the intermediate state between death and the general resurrection, the souls of the righteous know and love one another.”

Even in patriarchal times, long previous to the coming of Christ, after Whose resurrection there is reason to suppose the state of the righteous dead was greatly bettered, their condition appears to have been not merely *peaceful* but *companionable*.

The first of the two texts which I have chosen as my motto for this chapter, together with the

frequent use in the Old Testament of the analogous phrases, "He slept with his fathers," or, "was gathered to his people," would certainly appear to imply as much. It is to be noted that these expressions cannot refer to mere *juxta-position* in the grave, as one might, at the first glance, be inclined to suppose. For Abraham, to whom God made the promise aforesaid, died in the south of Palestine, and was buried at Hebron, in the cave of Machpelah, hundreds of miles distant from Ur of the Chaldees, where was the sepulchre of his father Terah.¹ Since, therefore, this "going to his fathers" must indicate a *real passage* to some common abode of the dead, it may fairly, I think, be further supposed that, at their meeting, a *real recognition* of the relationship which subsisted between them on earth would take place.

Again, David, whilst mourning the loss of his beloved child, can yet take comfort from the thought, "I shall go to him." He evidently believes, not only that it was "well with the child," but that there will be *mutual recognition* between parents and their offspring in that unseen world towards which all are hastening.

¹ Genesis xi. 28.

Furthermore, it is surely incredible that Moses and Elijah, who both knew our Lord, and conversed with Him at His transfiguration, should yet have been ignorant of one another.

Once again, in our Lord's parable, Dives, even from his dread and separate place, *recognises* Abraham, and Abraham Dives. Indeed, I am convinced that the expectation of saintly Baxter rests on a solid Scriptural foundation. "I must confess," he says "as the experience of my own soul, that the expectation of loving my friends in Heaven, principally kindles my love to them on earth. If I thought I should never *know* and consequently never love them after this life, I should number them with temporal things, and love them as such, but I now delightfully converse with my pious friends, in a firm persuasion that I shall converse with them for ever, and I take comfort in those that are dead or absent, believing that I shall shortly meet them in Heaven and love them with a Heavenly love."

It is indeed certain—for our Lord has said it—that the closest of earthly relationships, that of marriage, will there be abrogated. But the cause of this is obvious. *Here* the human race cannot continue by reason of death ; but *there*, they cannot

die any more, and so have no need of continual replenishment. There is not, however, on this account any good reason to assume that the relationships, whether of husband and wife, parent or child, will necessarily be *forgotten* hereafter.

On the contrary—and this brings me to my second hypothesis—it is in the highest degree probable that all true affection, which, like faith, is much more precious than gold that perisheth, will, when purged of its earthly dross, glow more ardently on those blissful shores. “Love,” says the royal preacher of old, “is strong as death,” but, for the Christian, there is a still more glorious revelation, *that love is stronger than death.* “Charity,” declares the Apostle Paul, “never faileth.” And what is “charity,” but love in its purest and most comprehensive sense? And why doth it never fail? Even because its Source is inexhaustible. “Love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God; he that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is Love.”¹ *Hope* will soon be lost in sight, and *Faith* will be swallowed up in fruition. But *Love*—the top and crown of the Christian graces—is immortal.

¹ 1 John iv. 7,

“They sin who tell us love can die,
With life all other passions fly—
All others are but vanity.
In heaven ambition cannot dwell,
Nor avarice in the vaults of hell ;
Earthly—these passions of the earth
Must perish where they had their birth ;
But love is indestructible ;
Its holy flame for ever burneth ;
From heaven it came—to heaven returneth.
Too oft on earth a troubled guest
At times deceived—at times opprest,
It here is tried and purified,
Then hath in heaven its perfect rest :
It soweth here with toil and care,
But the harvest-time of Love is there.”¹

What faithful follower of the Lamb will deny that there is such a thing as a “*fellowship of the Spirit*” even in this cold world ? Superior to all denominational exclusiveness ; overleaping the barriers of rank and birth, of intellect and prejudice ; making no account of differences of race or colour ; wherever this celestial magnet is present, soul cleaves to soul. But if so *here*, how much more *there*, where the veil of ignorance and false judgment is entirely done away !

If the Apostle could say to the church of the

¹ *Southey.*

Thessalonians: "As touching brotherly love ye need not that I should write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another," how superfluous will be such an exhortation in the land of light and love, where "they shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother," saying, "know the Lord, for all shall know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord."¹ The very atmosphere of Paradise must be full of Love, for Jesus is the King of Paradise, and He is the express Image of God's Person, and God is Himself essential and perfect Love.

It is well-nigh certain, therefore, that those tender sympathies which have united true hearts on earth will not be destroyed, but refined and purified in the world to come. All that is gross, carnal, of the earth, earthy, must cease; but every pure affection, so far from coming to an end, will burn with tenfold ardour in the breasts of the redeemed. Husbands and wives will love each other still; children and parents, brothers and sisters, companions and friends—all—will love one another *there*, with pure hearts fervently.

May you, dear reader, and I, even in this

¹ Jeremiah xxxi. 34.

life, be always and everywhere recognised as Christ's disciples by this Heavenly free-masonry of brotherly love !

And may God, who has prepared for them that love Him, such good things as pass man's understanding, pour into our hearts such love towards Himself, that we, loving Him above all things, may obtain His promises, which exceed all that we can desire ; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SOUL'S CONVOY TO PARADISE.

LUKE XVI. 22.

"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom : the rich man also died, and was buried."

"IT is probable, from Scripture, that the souls of the righteous at death, are borne by the angels to Paradise."

This hypothesis derives its only *direct* scriptural support from the words of our Lord above quoted.

Although His statement occurs in the course of a parable, it has all the appearance of a definite revelation. It must, I think, have impressed the mind of any unprejudiced hearer with the conviction that Christ was here speaking that which He knew and testifying that He had seen. For what other sense *can* we attach to His words apart from their obvious literal import? If, then, the angels discharged this blessed office for one of the

meanest of God's saints, why should they not do the same for all the rest ?

A brief consideration of what is clearly revealed anent the working of these celestial messengers will serve greatly to strengthen the probability now asserted. That the angels do keep watch and ward over the saints during their earthly pilgrimage is declared in numerous passages of holy writ. In the sixth chapter of the Second Book of Kings we read, that on a time, the prophet Elisha was saved by angelic hosts from the hand of his implacable enemy, the king of Syria. This man, being informed by his servants that Elisha was in the city of Dothan, sent thither, we are told, horses and chariots and a great host, and they came by night and compassed the city about. " And when the servant of the man of God was risen early and gone forth, behold ! an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas ! my master, how shall we do ? And he answered, Fear not ! for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed and said, Lord, I pray Thee open his eyes. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw, and behold ! the mountain was full of horses and chariots of

fire round about Elisha." What a striking confirmation of the psalmist's words! "The angel of the Lord *encampeth round about* them that fear Him and delivereth them." And again, "He maketh His angels spirits and His ministers *a flame of fire.*" And yet again, "the *chariots of God* are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels." In this place, the angels themselves appear to be called God's chariots, as the swift bearers of His will to every part of the universe.

Moreover, we are told on the authority of an apostle, that these are all "ministering spirits, sent to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation." Thus, not only to our Lord, as the Tempter doubtless knew full well, but to the humblest of His true followers, that Scripture applied, "He shall give His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways." Indeed, as one has well said, "The Incarnation marks a new epoch in angelic ministration. The Lord of Sabaoth having now descended from heaven to earth, it was natural that His servants should continue to do Him service there. Whether to predict and glorify His birth itself, to minister to Him after His temptation and agony, or to declare His resurrection and triumphant ascension, they seem now

to be indeed ‘ascending and descending upon the Son of Man,’ almost as though transferring to earth the ministrations of Heaven.” And this doctrine of “guardian angels” who watch over the weakest of genuine believers receives still further countenance and support from Him who is Lord both of men and angels—our Saviour Jesus Christ. “Take heed,” He once told His hearers, “that ye despise not one of these little ones which believe in Me, for I say unto you that in heaven *their angels* do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven.” And their intense interest in the spiritual welfare of mankind appears in our Lord’s assurance “that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” In this connection the beautiful description of the poet Spenser may be quoted, as in true harmony with God’s own word. Speaking of their beneficent ministries, he says :—

“ How oft do they their shining bowers leave,
To come to succour us that succour want ;
How oft do they with golden pinions cleave
The ambient skies like flying pursuivant ;
Against foul fiends to aid us, militant,
They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,

And their bright squadrons round about us plant,
And all for love and nothing for reward.
Oh why should heavenly God to men have such regard !”

If, then, the angels do thus minister to the saints in every vicissitude of their lives, what more likely than that they should hover round their dying beds and bear their souls to the celestial abodes when Death has released them from the burden of the flesh ? I repeat, therefore, it is probable from Scripture that the souls of the righteous, when they die, are borne by the angels to Paradise.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

HEBREWS XII. 1.

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”

DOES the Church triumphant “in the heavenly places” sympathise with the Church militant here on earth?

It is *in some degree* probable, from Scripture, that the souls of the righteous in Paradise are not altogether ignorant of what is passing on earth.

I shall barely mention the facts which have been already noticed in the course of the present disquisition; (1) that the spirit of Samuel, when summoned by the witch of Endor’s magic spells, does not appear oblivious of earthly things. His prophecy with regard to Saul and his two sons presupposes him to know that war was then going on between Israel and the Philistines.

(2.) It is hard to imagine that Moses, who spake familiarly with Christ at His transfiguration “concerning His *decease* which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem,” should have known nothing of His *previous history*, nor would—except for that brief interval—know anything of its tragic yet triumphant *close*.

(3.) In our Lord’s parable, the spirit of Abraham is made to refer to *the past experience* both of Dives and of Lazarus, how could this knowledge have been acquired ?

But the only text which bears at all directly upon this mysterious theme is that which is pre-fixed to the present chapter. There can be no doubt that we have here an agonistic metaphor, borrowed from the ancient amphitheatre, with its multitudinous seats, ranged tier above tier beneath the open sky, filled with spectators, all gazing with eager and sympathetic eyes upon the gladiators or runners in the arena below.

This first verse of the twelfth chapter is the logical conclusion drawn from the preceding illustrations, hence the division adopted in our authorised version is peculiarly unfortunate. In the eleventh chapter the Apostle, after defining faith, proceeds to show the worthy fruits thereof in

the Fathers of old time. All of them had lived and died in faith, and many of them had sealed their good confession with their blood. Nevertheless, even these—martyrs though they were—received not the promises, “God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” “Wherefore,” he concludes, “seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” That the “cloud of witnesses” here spoken of, can be none other than the innumerable company of angels, together with the spirits of just men made perfect, of whom we read in the twenty-second and twenty-third verses of this chapter, hardly, I think, admits of a doubt, especially when we take into account the word used to describe them—“a cloud.” This is one of the most *immaterial* of substances, and is, therefore, admirably fitted to denote an array of purely spiritual beings. In the ancient races, the competitors divested themselves of every superfluous article of clothing that could impede their running and so lessen their chances of the prize ; in the Christian race the Apostle enjoins the practice of a like

spiritual economy. There, too, every obstacle to success—but especially the encumbering weight of sin—is to be cast aside. Again, in the amphitheatre, the multitudes were wont to encourage, by their plaudits, those who distinguished themselves in the various struggles. “Euge! Euge! Well done!” resounded on every side; or again, to overwhelm with hisses those who did not run well or fairly, or refused to put forth their utmost powers. Every athlete knows what a stimulus to effort is afforded by the love of applause and the fear of disgrace. It certainly *looks* as though the Apostle were alluding to this familiar experience, when he bids the candidates for the prize of their high calling of God in Christ Jesus, run with patience the race set before them.

I am well aware that the cloud of “witnesses,” here pictured as encompassing the saints, are not necessarily “onlookers,” but “martyrs,” as the Greek indicates. They are the “spirits” of the patriarchs and prophets, and faithful men and women of the olden time, who, having received “a good report” (lit., having testimony or witness borne to them), all died in faith. These, St. Paul assures us, had not yet received the promises, that is, I suppose, had not yet been admitted to their perfect consum-

mation and bliss both in body and soul. But what relation, I ask, can be intended by this figure of the Apostle, as subsisting between them and their struggling brethren upon earth, if it be not that of *interested spectators?*

It is a clearly revealed doctrine of Scripture that the *holy angels* are in mysterious sympathy with men. We read in the book of Job, that when the foundations of the earth were laid "the morning stars sang together, *and all the sons of God shouted for joy.*" And when this fair world of ours, having been laid waste by sin, received the sure earnest of its future restoration by the birth of the Redeemer, the angelic host once more breaks forth into anthems of praise, singing "*Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men.*"

Again, this doctrine is established by St. Paul's words in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, when at the eighth and following verses, he writes: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach amongst the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God,

who created all things by Jesus Christ, *to the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.*"

Yet once more, it is distinctly enunciated by the same inspired authority, in the fourth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. Speaking of the ignominious sufferings to which he and his brother apostles were constantly exposed, he says : "I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death, for we are made a spectacle"—in the Greek, 'theatron'—"to the world, *and to angels, and to men.*" Now, if it be true that the holy angels are in some way acquainted with our affairs, why should it be thought inconceivable that the spirits of just men made perfect, and endowed, as is probable, with faculties "undreamt of in our philosophy," should possess a like marvellous intuition ? This inexplicable knowledge which the holy angels have, would appear to be shared even by *fallen* spirits. In the history of our Lord's temptation, Satan is represented as taking Him up into "an exceeding high mountain *and showing Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them in a moment of time.*" Now we do not usually show others what we cannot

see ourselves. It is therefore only a fair inference from this Scripture that Satan, the prince of this world, *has, or can have, before his eye at once, and with panoramic distinctness, all his vast domains.* But if this mysterious power be given to any created being, why may it not be granted to the spirits of the righteous in Paradise? On our Lord's own showing, "they who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world *are equal unto the angels.*" Why should they be debarred from any of their prerogatives?

A clerical friend, to whom I broached this theory, objected that if the spirits of the departed saints are witnesses of our doings, they must often be grieved and pained at the sight. This, however, is only one of several difficulties which present themselves in our contemplation of the future state, and cannot be allowed to disprove our present supposition. For example, how can the perfect happiness of the redeemed consist with the knowledge that some of those whom they have loved on earth are lost? Revelation is silent concerning this mystery, and reason affords us no satisfactory clue.

There remains yet another argument in favour of the view here stated. In the Apostles' Creed

we are taught to say, “ I believe in the communion of saints.” By this has always been understood that “ mystic sweet communion,” that inner sympathy of heart and life, which in spite of manifold outward differences, subsists between all God’s faithful people, whether in this world or *in the next*. The source of this union lies in their possession of the self-same Spirit. Now, the idea I am advocating, appears latent in this article of our Christian confession. It must be admitted that there is no *sensible* communion or communication between the saints militant here in earth and the saints triumphant in the heavenly places, but it does not therefore follow that *they* are as ignorant of us, as *we* are of them. And although I am not aware of any other Scriptural arguments in favour of this hypothesis, except those above considered, the universal agreement on this point of the Christian Church, as represented by her foremost divines, must be regarded as of great weight in the determination of the question. Bishop Pearson—one of the greatest names in the Church of England—in his unrivalled exposition of the Creed, says, under this head : “ The saints of God, living in the Church of Christ, are in communion with all the saints departed out of this life and admitted to

the presence of God. Jerusalem sometimes is taken for the Church on earth, sometimes for that part of the Church which is in heaven, to show that as both are represented by one, so both are but one city of God. Wherefore thus doth the Apostle speak to such as are called to the Christian faith: ‘Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.’ Indeed the communion of saints in the Church of Christ with those which are departed, is demonstrated by their communion with the saints alive. For if I have communion with a saint of God as such while he liveth here, I must still have communion with him when he is departed hence, because the foundation of that communion cannot be removed by death. The mystical union between Christ and His Church, the spiritual conjunction of the members to the Head, is the true foundation of that communion which one member hath with another; all the members living and increasing by the same influence which they receive from Him. But death, which is nothing

more than the separation of the soul from the body, maketh no separation in the mystical union, no breach of the spiritual conjunction ; and consequently there must continue the same communion because there remaineth the same foundation.

"The true and unfeigned holiness of man, wrought by the powerful influence of the Spirit of God, not only remaineth, but also is improved after death. Seeing the correspondence of the internal holiness was the communion between these persons in their life, they cannot be said to be divided by death, which had no power over that sanctity by which they were first conjoined. But this communion of the saints in heaven and earth, upon the mystical union with Christ their head, being fundamental and internal, *what acts or external operations it produceth, is not so certain.* That we communicate with them in hope of that happiness which they actually enjoy is evident ; that we have the Spirit of God given us as an earnest and as a part of their felicity is certain. *But what they do in heaven relative to us on earth, particularly considered, or what we ought to perform in reference to them in heaven, besides a reverential respect and a study of imitation, is not revealed to us in the Scriptures, nor can be concluded by necessary deduction from any*

principles of Christianity. They which first formed this part of the Article in the Creed and delivered their exposition unto us, have made no greater enlargement of this communion as to the saints in heaven, than the society of hope, esteem, and imitation on our side, of *desires and supplications on their side*; and what is now taught by the Church of Rome is an unwarrantable and a novitiously interpretation."

Though, as we see here, the Bishop refrains from drawing out this doctrine into any detail, he yet, in a foot-note, appends extracts from St. Augustine's sermons, one of which may be thus translated:— "Why should we not hasten, yea! run, to see our heavenly fatherland? There a great number of our dear ones await us: parents, brothers, sons—a multitudinous throng is longing for our coming, already secure of their own safety, *but still solicitous concerning our salvation.*"

Finally, it must be admitted that our knowledge in regard to this subject, amounts to hardly anything, and assuredly supplies no ground for the *invocation of saints* as practised in the Church of Rome. This is not warranted by so much as a single hint in any of the *canonical* writings, and

has been, and is still, the fruitful parent of many baneful and degrading superstitions.

I end, therefore, as I began, by saying that it is, *in some degree*, probable from Scripture that the souls of the righteous in Paradise are not altogether ignorant of what is passing upon earth.

CHAPTER XIV.

ST. PAUL CAUGHT UP INTO PARADISE.

2 CORINTHIANS, XII. 1—4.

“ It is not expedient for me, doubtless, to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell ; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell : God knoweth ;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell : God knoweth ;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”

THE above passage of Scripture presents many interesting topics of thought, although, partly from the intentional indirectness of the Apostle’s language, partly from the imperfect rendering of our authorised version, its correct interpretation is not free from difficulties. These may, perhaps, best be cleared up by a reference to those events which compelled that “boasting” or “glorying” in which St. Paul indulges in this epistle—which events are themselves its complete justification.

In the Corinthian Church were many false brethren, crept in unawares, who not only adulterated the pure Gospel of Christ by their false and carnal glosses, but, in order to exalt themselves, strove by every possible means to depreciate St. Paul's authority. They even resorted to base personalities to effect this end. They asserted, for instance, that though his letters were weighty, and couched in peremptory language, yet, as they must all remember, "his bodily presence was weak, and his speech contemptible." To this taunt, of which he had probably heard through Titus, the Apostle replies with unwonted asperity. He protests that if they will not learn wisdom from his moderation, they shall be made to feel that power which the Lord had given him for edification. His detractors shall find that such as he was, *in word*, by letters when absent, such also would he be, *in deed*, when present.

In the eleventh chapter of this epistle he refers to another calumny of his adversaries—that it was because he distrusted his own authority that he had refused to receive the maintenance to which, as an Apostle of Christ, he would have been entitled, at the hands of the Corinthians. The *fact* that he had not made himself burden-

some to them as he lawfully might have done, he admits, but the *inference* they drew from it he utterly denies. It was not any distrust of the validity of his Apostolic commission which made him act thus, but a simple resolve he had formed to preach the Gospel in those parts free of charge —a resolve which he maintains to be a just subject of boasting, and of which neither they nor any one should deprive him. “As the truth of Christ is in me,” he boldly exclaims, “no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia. Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth! But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion.” In plain words—These men who charge me with covetousness, arrogance, and double-dealing, shall be shown up in their true colours: their falsehood shall be exposed by my sincere and unselfish carriage towards you all, for “it is not yours I seek, but you.”

Furthermore, these unworthy Christians, who, as the context shows, were by birth Israelites, made their descent from Abraham and their obedience to the Mosaic law, a ground of boasting. In all these respects, the Apostle declares, if any man has a right to boast—he more. “Are they Hebrews?

So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I." Then follows that unrivalled catalogue of journeyings, perils, watchings, fastings, reproaches, and sufferings undergone for Christ's sake. "In these things which concern my infirmities will I glory—if I must needs glory." In these my infirmities, the power of God is made manifest. The perfection of His strength is best seen in contrast with my weakness. He it is Who hath delivered me, when in despair of my life, out of the hands of all my enemies. He it is Who hath enabled me to surmount all obstacles, and hath brought me unscathed through the most fiery trials, and hath thus declared me to be a chosen vessel, preserved by His providence, consecrated by His grace, made meet for His use, and destined hereafter to be a partaker of His everlasting glory. I will boast therefore not of my strength but of my weakness, not of what I have *done*, but of what I have *suffered*.

The way has now been cleared for a right understanding of the text. St. Paul has just been glorying, not in himself, but in his infirmities and reproaches, the most shameful of which—his escape from Damascus in a basket let down over the city wall—he has reserved as a sort of climax till the

last. "It is not expedient, therefore, doubtless, for *me* to boast." Here the emphasis must be laid on the words "for me." I, whose whole life has been but a string of ignominious sufferings, will not boast of what I have done, but of what has been done to me—whether in the way of reproach by men, or in the way of favour by the Lord—of these things will I boast. I will not boast of my own goodness towards others—but glory I will in the Lord's signal goodness and favour towards me.

"I will come, therefore," he continues, "to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew" (or rather as it is in the Greek, "I know") "a man in Christ, above fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I cannot tell, or out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man (whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth) how that he was caught up into Paradise and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for *a man* to utter." That the Apostle is here speaking of himself admits of no question, for in the seventh verse of this same chapter he says, that "lest he should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, there was

given him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger or Satan to buffet him," and so check the uprising of that perilous pride which has proved the ruin of so many souls.

Moreover, he does not speak of his knowledge as *past*, according to the inadvertent rendering of our translators, but as *present*. I know a man in Christ, who fourteen years ago enjoyed these marvellous experiences. The time of these events, which happened fourteen years before the writing of this Epistle, furnishes us with one of those undesigned coincidences in which the Scriptures abound, and which are amongst the weightiest human arguments for its genuineness and authenticity. This letter was written, as is generally agreed, in A.D. 57. Fourteen years reckoned inclusively, will carry us back to the year forty-four, the probable date of Paul's ordination to the Apostleship of the Gentiles. This must not be confounded with his conversion, which took place at least three years earlier. His setting apart for the ministry of the Gospel amongst the Gentiles occurred at Antioch, in Syria, and it was there in all likelihood that these wondrous revelations were given to him.

By a "man in Christ," he appears to mean,

simply a Christian man, one who abides in Christ by a living and a loving faith.

We now come to the vision itself. As to the *reality* of this the Apostle has no doubt, but the manner of it is confessedly matter of uncertainty with him. "Whether," he says, "I was in the body or out of the body when these things happened, I cannot tell—God knoweth." This statement is of the highest moment, as proving that Paul—in whom was the truth of Christ—recognised the possibility of a man's being snatched up *bodily* into heaven, as were Enoch and Elijah of old, or again of body and spirit being *sundered* for a time, as would seem to have happened to Ezekiel, Daniel, and St. John. What he now experienced was a real *ecstasy*. The word itself is rapidly degenerating, but as every scholar knows, it meant originally "a standing out of," or, "beside oneself," and so exactly describes the nature of the Apostle's vision.

Whether there be any truth in the pretensions of our nineteenth century clairvoyants, trance mediums, spiritualists and the like, I know not. But this I fearlessly assert, founding my belief on the Bible, that such things have been,¹

¹ *Vide* Numbers xxiv. 15, 16; 1 Samuel xxviii. 7-20, *et passim*.

and therefore, *à fortiori*, *may be* again. As a matter of opinion, apart from any positive knowledge, I regard them as a mixture of fact and fiction, of reality and jugglery ; the latter no doubt in most instances preponderating. In any case, I believe they are harmful, if not demoniacal. To myself and others I would say, "Touch not the unclean thing." Old Jacob's words would exactly express my sentiments towards these phenomena and their votaries. "O my soul, come not thou into their secret—unto their assembly, mine honour —be not thou united."

But, as there is no agreement between light and darkness, no concord between Christ and Belial, so there is no comparison between such questionable things and the genuine revelations of God's good Spirit.

To return then to the text. St. Paul doubts not at all whether he was really caught up, he is only uncertain whether there was a translation of both body and soul, or only of the disembodied spirit. "Such an one," he continues, "caught up to the third heaven," or more exactly "as far as" the third heaven. Here the question presents itself, What are we to understand by the "third heaven?" Is the Apostle here borrowing from Rabbinical

tradition, according to which there are in all, seven heavens? The first, the visible atmosphere; the second, the blue vault beyond, in which are the sun, moon, and stars; the third, the abode of the lowest order of angels; the succeeding heavens, of higher orders, whilst the highest, or seventh heaven, is the seat of the immediate Presence and infinitely glorious Manifestation of the Lord God Almighty? Or, must we not rather suppose, with some Jewish and nearly all Christian interpreters, that by the third heaven, St. Paul meant the highest heaven, where are the radiant quires of cherubim and seraphim and all the angelic host around the throne of God, and where peals the unceasing anthem which Isaiah heard, "Holy! Holy! Holy! is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory"? This latter supposition is the more probable; first, because it is highly doubtful whether St. Paul attached any weight to the tradition of the Rabbis; and secondly, because he speaks of himself, *not* as actually caught up into heaven, whither, as our Lord assures us, "no man hath ascended at any time," but only *as far as* it—that is, to its confines; whereas, in the next verse, he declares he was actually caught up *into* Paradise. Thus understood, "the third

heaven" and Paradise will be distinct from each other.

Paradise, as far as we know, never indicates the highest heaven, but only that intermediate place and state of happiness on which the souls of the righteous enter after death. As regards the word "Paradise," I may perhaps be permitted briefly to repeat what were the ideas connected with it in devout minds at this time. It was a royal garden or park, girt with an inclosure and adorned with all manner of trees and shrubs and flowers, and fruits, both good for food and pleasant to the eye. It was also stocked with beasts of chase and birds of rarest plumage, and was watered by refreshing streams. In fine it was like Eden, that garden of delights in which dwelt our first parents before the fall.

It must, however, be particularly noted that, though it signified a royal park surrounding a royal palace, this park and palace were always regarded as distinct from each other. Hence, we may infer, that although the Paradise of God teems with unutterable joys, and these perchance material as well as spiritual—or at any rate, *objective* as well as *subjective*—and though it leads to the palace of the King of kings, even Heaven itself, it is *not*, strictly speaking, Heaven. But since the presence of

Eastern potentates was more often accorded to their "paradise," or royal demesne, than to other places, so Scripture teaches that the souls which are in Paradise, have a nearer fruition of the Divine Presence than they had on earth. They are said to be "in the hand of God," and "with Christ," yet have they not attained to that "perfect consummation and bliss" which awaits them, when body and soul are reunited at the general resurrection.

Into Paradise then, as distinct from and beneath the highest heaven, we may conclude St. Paul to have been caught up. There it was that he heard "unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter." Who were the speakers? *Certainly* the holy angels; *probably* the spirits of just men made perfect. As, however, this "probability" can hardly be sustained by definite arguments, and is rather to be felt than clearly demonstrated, I shall not further insist upon it here. But that *angelic* voices were then heard by St. Paul cannot, I think, be questioned. You will remember that the Apostle begins his sublime praise of the royal grace of "charity" with these remarkable words,—"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of *angels*." *Speech* therefore is common to us and them, though it is only reasonable to

suppose that the celestial language not only differs from—which is here implied—but far *excels* our own.

Again, it is evident that St. Paul *understood* this language, though he might not recall it, else how should he know that what he then heard was “unlawful for a man to utter”? *We* therefore shall understand hereafter.

But why were these words “unspeakable,” we naturally inquire? Perhaps for that reason suggested by our Saviour, when in His conversation with Nicodemus he said, “If I tell you of earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of *heavenly things?*” The subject of them was doubtless some of those mysteries of redemption, which are not to be fathomed on this side of eternity. Being part of that wisdom of God which is unsearchable—if declared—they would not have been comprehended by earthly intelligences: but we are told by our Apostle, Eph. iii. 10, that *the angels* do take the deepest interest in the progress and final triumph of God’s kingdom on earth.

Again, we should like to know why it was *not lawful* for a man to utter them. Certainly it was not because they bore any resemblance to those

flagitious things, of which, the Apostle says, "it is a shame even to speak." Rather, because of the surpassing glory and beauty of them, they must not *yet* be made manifest. For mere *men* they were "too high"; "they could not attain unto them." Holier and more exalted beings might—and did—utter them without reproach. "Only those things which are revealed," as we are reminded by Moses in the Book of Deuteronomy, "belong unto us and to our children; the *secret things* belong unto the Lord our God."

Should any inquire why these transcendent revelations were vouchsafed to St. Paul alone, the reason is doubtless to be found in the *extraordinary* trials and sufferings which he was called on to undergo. He was, "in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent," than they all; in order that he might not faint beneath his burdens, a full view of the delights of Paradise—the sure and peaceful refuge of his weary soul at last—was granted him.

Paul was one of the few partial exceptions to that otherwise universal rule, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." He was in a pre-eminent

degree made a partaker of the Holy Ghost, and tasted beyond any of his fellows, of the good word of God and of the powers of the world to come.”¹ Still what he *saw* he either could not, or might not, reveal ; what he *heard*, he dared not utter. Nevertheless, it was the ever present consciousness of these, his supreme credentials, that gave him such boldness in the presence of his most envious detractors. “Am I not an Apostle? *Have I not seen our Lord Jesus Christ?*” Such was his confident language on all occasions. It was the recollection of these bright past experiences which continually sustained him, and caused him to exclaim—“I reckon,” *i.e.*, *not I conjecture*, but “*I who have perfect knowledge of the fact, account as certain*, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall hereafter be revealed in us.” This it was which enabled him to testify with all the veracity and authority of an *eye-witness*, that the “light tribulation,” enduring but for a moment, which he and his converts experienced, was working out for them “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

Amongst the most specious excuses which un-

¹ Compare Hebrews vi. 4—5.

belief is wont to urge in palliation of its conduct, are these, "Where are your facts?" "Give us some positive assurance of the truth of these strange things which you bring to our ears." "Show us a single human being who has any certain information to impart of the joys in store for the faithful in the world to come." To such we may reply, "Your desire is unreasonable, and, if granted, would not produce conviction in your minds. For, 'if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.'" Besides, *it has been granted* more than once; your Saviour rose from the dead, and continued forty days upon this earth, showing Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, to the Apostles and disciples whom He had chosen, and speaking of the things pertaining unto the kingdom of God. St. Paul, if you will receive it, was *actually* caught up into Paradise; whether in the body or out of the body, God alone knoweth; where he heard unspeakable words, and saw, as we may without doubt conclude, ineffable sights.

The believer, on the other hand, I opine, will readily and joyfully admit that the following facts, all bearing upon the subject of this treatise—the place and state of the souls of the righteous

after death—are deducible, directly or indirectly, from this priceless autobiographic episode of the Apostle's history.

1. There is, beyond the ken of our senses, "a land of pure delight," called "Paradise," identical, for all that appears to the contrary, with the blessed abode of departed spirits, whither the human spirit of our Lord went at death, and where, according to His promise, the soul of the penitent thief accompanied Him.

2. As, in regard of his calling to the Apostleship, St. Paul speaks of himself as one "born out of due time," *i.e.*, *later* than the proper time, so, in regard of his subsequent spiritual experiences, he was distinguished above his brother Apostles, being admitted *before* his time, to a real, though brief foretaste of the joys of the world to come.

3. Seeing that we have no doubt that he is here speaking the words of truth and soberness, his testimony affords an unimpeachable guarantee of the *reality* of things not seen as yet, and ought to serve us as an incentive to all holiness and pureness of living, so that, finally, after this life, we may be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SHAPE OF THE SOUL.

LUKE XXIV. 36—39.

“And as they thus spake Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.”

IT is probable, from Scripture, that “*the shape*” or “*outline*” of the soul is the same as that of the body which it once inhabited.

It is, I apprehend, an axiom which cannot be disputed, that the attribute of “form” is inseparable from every created thing, though, as in the case of the surrounding air, from the extreme tenuity of its substance—or of electricity, that mysterious force which flashes our messages across the earth—it is, *under ordinary conditions*, invisible.

Even chaos itself cannot, in the strictest sense, be *formless*. How much less that mysterious combination of faculties—perception, reason, imagination, conscience, and the rest, which we term *ourselves*. These must, it should seem, have some receptacle wherein they are contained, though we, in our gross mundane state, be hardly able to conceive of it. The question I now propose to discuss, whilst, as must be admitted, rather curious than profitable, is not so absolutely beyond the reach of our understanding as might perhaps be supposed. Scripture *does* furnish us with several clues to its solution, and to these I shall direct your attention.

The first *authentic*, because *inspired*, account of the appearance of a spirit is that of the dead prophet Samuel to affrighted Saul. You see, I am here assuming that this was a genuine manifestation. Indeed, I think no one who is not unalterably biased against all such supernatural appearances, whether found in the Bible or elsewhere, can calmly and dispassionately read this account, without coming to the conclusion that it was no mere vulgar piece of jugglery, but an awful, though mysterious, reality. The contrary opinion involves the more difficult supposition that the *witch* of Endor was *an inspired prophetess*, and foretold what

actually came to pass on the following day, the death of the king and both his sons in battle.¹ Whilst fully prepared to allow that many, perhaps all, ghost stories of modern days are only cunningly-devised fables or the result of a disordered and diseased imagination, I would resolutely decline to reckon in this category that which is now to be considered.

But first, let me observe that the *possibility* of a communication between the dead and the living is solemnly and emphatically asserted in the Oracles of God. In Leviticus, xx. 27, we read : "A man, or a woman, that hath *a familiar spirit* or that is a wizard shall surely be put to death ; they shall stone them with stones and their blood shall be upon them." Now is it credible, I ask, that such a terrible punishment as this should be decreed by Almighty God against one who was a mere *pretender* to such forbidden intercourse ? If so, what meaneth that warning voice in the Prophet Isaiah ?² "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits and unto

¹ Besides, anxious as she must have been above all things to propitiate Saul by prophesying good and not evil concerning him, is it imaginable that she should, of her own accord, first take upon herself to reproach him with forsaking the Lord, and then predict his imminent and bloody end ?

² Isaiah viii. 19.

wizards that peep and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God: *for the living to the dead?*" Should they, that is, call up the *dead* to resolve the doubts and dispel the fears which perplex the living?

It is not my intention, in this place, to examine minutely the vivid description of Samuel's appearance to the unhappy Saul. It is found in the 28th Chapter of the First Book of Samuel, and its perusal will amply repay any thought that may be expended on it. I only refer to it here, because it touches upon the question now before us—the shape of the spirit. Upon the woman's inquiry, "Whom shall I bring up unto thee?" Saul answered, "Samuel. And when the woman *saw Samuel* she cried with a loud voice, and the woman spake to Saul saying, Why hast thou deceived me? For thou art Saul." This cry of terror is explained by verse 9: "And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits and the wizards out of the land, wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life to cause me to die? And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? and the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods"—rather god-like or majestic forms—

"ascending out of the earth. And he said unto her, *What form* is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up and he is covered with a mantle." This, it may be observed, was the distinctive garb of the prophets. This is my first evidence from Scripture in support of the conjecture above stated, that "the outline of the spirit is the same as that of the body which it once inhabited."

As agreeing with, though of course not in any way strengthening this probability, I may be permitted to instance Hamlet's magnificent adjuration of the spirit of Denmark's departed king :—

" Angels and ministers of grace defend us !
Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned,
Bring'st with thee airs from heaven or blasts from
hell,
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
Thou comest in such a questionable shape
That I will speak to thee ! I'll call thee Hamlet,
King, father, royal Dane. O answer me,
Let me not burst in ignorance, but tell
Why thy canonized bones, hearsed in death
Have burst their cerements : why the sepulchre
Wherein we saw thee quietly inurned
Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws
To cast thee up again ? What may this mean
That thou, dead corse, again in complete steel,
Revisitest thus the glimpses of the moon ? "

But to return from human utterances, however sublime, to the infallible Word. In the Book of Job, we have another memorable example of ghostly visitation. In the fourth chapter, at the thirteenth and following verses, it is written:—“Now a thing was secretly brought to me and mine ear received a little thereof. Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face: the hair of my flesh stood up. It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: *an image was before mine eyes*: there was silence, and I heard a voice.” Here, though not *distinctly* seen, the spirit is represented as possessed of the attribute of “form”; for an “image,” or “outline,” saith Job, “was before my face.”

From the Old Testament, let us now pass to the New. There, the hypothesis of “bodily shape,” as belonging to the spirit, is confirmed by both the instances which have already provided us with so many arguments. On the mount, Moses—to say nothing of Elijah—is seen by the three favoured Apostles, *in corporeal form*. In the parable of Dives and Lazarus, where the actors are disembodied spirits, *all wear the semblance of their former selves*. Several of their principal members are

mentioned. Wretched Dives *lifts up his eyes* and begs Abraham to *send Lazarus* that he may dip *the tip of his finger* in water and cool his *tongue*. On this passage Dean Alford in his commentary pertinently observes :—“The fact is that the material corpse remains on this earth, whilst that personality, to which universal consent rightly attributes sensibility to bliss and woe, and the feelings *and parts of the body*—the man’s real self—is translated into the other world. If, when parts of the body are removed, we still believe that we possess those limbs and *feel pain in them*, why may not the disembodied spirit still subjectively exist in, and feel the sensations of, that corporeal system from which it is temporarily separated ?” In striking harmony with this view is the fact that angels, who are *pure spirits*, whenever they have been visible, have always been seen *in the likeness of men*.

Let me, in conclusion, direct your thoughts to that passage of St. Luke’s Gospel which forms the superscription of this present chapter ; and first, be it noted, that this is not the only recorded instance of the natural terror of the disciples at a supposed ghostly appearance. In the eighth chapter of St. Matthew’s Gospel, as also in the parallel passages of St. Mark and St.

John, we are told how Jesus, who had been left alone on the eastern shores of the Lake of Galilee, suddenly appeared to them. "The ship was now in the midst of the sea tossed with waves, for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea, and when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea they were troubled, saying, *it is a spirit.*" The last occasion, on which they fell into this very pardonable error, was on the evening of our Lord's resurrection. They were all gathered together in "the upper room" with barred and bolted doors, for fear of the Jews. The two disciples had just returned in breathless haste from Emmaus, and had barely finished telling the wondrous tale of their encounter by the way with their risen Master, when, on a sudden, "Jesus Himself *stood* in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you ! But they were terrified and affrighted, and *supposed that they had seen a spirit.* And He said unto them, Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet that it is I myself ; handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." Now we may, I believe, take it for granted that our Lord

would not have encouraged, *even by His silence*, any radically false notions which the disciples entertained on this, or any other subject. "If it were not so, I would have told you," was ever His way with His simple, yet true-hearted, followers. But He does not expostulate with them on the folly or absurdity of *supposing that they could see a spirit*; He merely reminds them that a spirit has not a material, tangible body, like that which they saw, He still had. Thus His silence seems to sanction the theory I have been propounding.

If it be objected that all such hypotheses are vague and unprofitable, I can only say that I see nothing wrong in trying to form the best ideas we can upon this subject. What, I would ask the objector, is your conception of the spirit? Do you suppose—if you have given yourself the trouble to think at all about the matter—that it is, according to its original signification, a mere "*breath*," an airy, unsubstantial "*nothing*" or "*next-to-nothing*," not only impalpable, which it probably *is*, but necessarily shapeless and invisible, which it probably *is not?* To my mind this—which I fancy is the popular view—appears far more unreasonable, far less scriptural, than that

above stated. I confidently affirm that to those who accept the Bible as their supreme rule of faith, there appears nothing intrinsically impossible in the visible manifestation of the spirits of the departed ; indeed St. Matthew relates—what is far harder to be accounted for—that after Christ's resurrection “The graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept, arose and came out of the graves and went into the Holy City and appeared unto many.”

I have tried to avoid all reproach of dogmatism on this question. We can only speak here with a “peradventure”: as we know not the “way of the spirit,” neither do we know—I use the words in a somewhat different sense from that in which they were originally employed—“*what manner of spirit we are of.*” However, it matters nothing whether we can determine or not what may be the shape of the soul; the only thing of consequence to us is, that when our dust returns to the earth as it was, our spirits should return to God who gave them. The “one thing needful” for us is, that our souls should be saved “in the day of the Lord.” How this may be accomplished, God has plainly and repeatedly told us in His Holy Word.

“ When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness which he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, *he shall save his soul alive.*” “ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,” with the heart unto righteousness, and “ *thou shalt be saved.*” May we never be of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul !

CHAPTER XVI.

“THE SOULS BENEATH THE ALTAR.”

REVELATION VI. 9—11.

“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? and white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.”

THE passage of Scripture which heads this chapter, being in some degree pertinent to the present inquiry, could not well be passed over in silence. It forms mysterious part of that ecstatic vision of the Seer of Patmos, recorded in the Revelation, in which are so many things superlatively “hard to be understood.” On this account, it has been thought advisable to reserve it for separate and independent treatment.

When we come to the last book of the Bible, we are on almost entirely new ground. We have passed from the domain of the real to that of the ideal, from the literal to the allegorical, from facts to metaphors. Now, although it cannot be too much emphasised, as an oft-forgotten truth, that tropes and metaphors, however transcendental, must nevertheless represent facts—must have facts underlying them—this does not lessen the difficulty of their interpretation, which for us, in the present instance, from our limited sphere of time and sense is, I believe, almost, if not altogether, insuperable.

From plain narrative, from distinct doctrinal statements, even from the parabolic teaching of our Saviour, I have not hesitated to draw certain definite conclusions, as to the place and state of the souls of the righteous between death and the general resurrection. Here the case is different. When I remember the bewildering and excited controversies which have been, and are still, waged over this book—when I call to mind the doubts which exist as to whether it refers to the past, present or future, or again, as seems most probable, to these three tenses combined—I hardly dare venture to dignify with the title of

arguments, the few remarks which I propose to make on these obscure and isolated verses. They are, however, placed before the discerning reader for what they may be worth, with the view especially of showing that, in spite of appearances, this passage of Scripture does not weaken the force of the reasoning by which, in the rest of this treatise, I have sought to demonstrate the happy estate of the souls of the faithful in Paradise.

St. John was "in the spirit," brought like Ezekiel in the visions of God, into the upper sanctuary and encompassed by the sublime, yet withal, mysterious imagery of Heaven. The wondrous scroll, sealed with its seven seals; which none but the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, could prevail to open, is in course of being unfolded. "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held, and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord ! holy and true, dost not Thou judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth ?" To the casual view, I confess, this looks but a sorry spectacle, fitted rather to

excite our compassion than to raise our hopes. We picture to ourselves a confused assemblage of souls, lying prostrate beneath the altar, in an altogether unenviable, if not actually painful state. But first impressions are often deceptive, notably so here. For it is to be observed that we are now in the heavenly temple, "in the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man." The altar under which the souls of the martyrs are seen, is not, as we have perhaps thought, the altar of burnt sacrifice. The Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world, being now slain, the blood of bulls and of goats has lost even its former typical significance. This is the golden altar of incense which was before the throne of God. (Comp. ch. viii. 3, 4). And, since we there read that this incense was mingled with the prayers of all saints, and that the fragrant smoke of the incense ascended from the golden censer in the angel's hand up before God, we may, I think, infer that the posture of these souls was not *recumbent*, but that of *lowly adoration*. We may best conceive of them as kneeling with their upturned gaze fixed on the beatific vision of Him that sat upon the throne.

Such a posture would harmonise with their

prayer: "How long, O Lord! holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Here, again, their cry must not be mistaken for a cry of suffering, still less must it be regarded as a call for revenge. That vindictive thoughts should be harboured by the souls of the martyrs is utterly incredible. They who *here* had been distinguished for that supreme grace of charity, which "seeketh not her own and beareth all things," cannot *there* have become revengeful. They who had been taught to love their enemies, to bless those who persecuted them, and to pray for those who despitefully used them, cannot so far have forgotten their lesson. No, they appear rather as God's remembrancers, putting Him in mind of His declared purposes. "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord! I will repay." "Your blood of your lives will I require, at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man."

They knew that it was "a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation" to their murderers. Not until *these* had suffered their appointed doom, could *they* attain to their complete perfection. Hence their prayer, though savouring somewhat of impatience, is mainly one

of longing expectancy, and may be taken as nearly equivalent to that in the solemn office of the Church of England for the burial of the dead : "That it may please Thee of Thy gracious goodness shortly to accomplish the number of Thine elect, *and to hasten Thy kingdom*, that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of Thy holy name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in Thy eternal and everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

We have examined the previous condition and prayer of the souls under the altar ; let us next weigh the answer vouchsafed to them. "And white robes were given unto every one of them ; and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants, also, and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." This reply, though not so liable to be misunderstood, is apt to convey very inadequate ideas of the truth represented, to the minds of the unlearned. "White robes," we are told, "were given to every one of them." The significance of this gift is placed beyond doubt in chap. xiv. v. 8, where, at the marriage supper of the Lamb, His bride

is thus apparelled. "To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; *for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.*"

The souls of the martyrs who had been faithful unto death, being now clad in the white and spotless robes, indicative of Christ's imputed and imparted righteousness, are further bidden "to rest yet for a little season." It is worthy of note that the form of words here used, implies that they *had been resting before*, and that the "little season" is regarded from the Divine, not from the human, stand-point. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

Lest any should think that, after all, their state, even as amended, was only *tolerable*, not desirable, it may be added that the original Greek word here translated, "rest," nearly always has a moral complexion, and includes within itself the notion of "REFRESHMENT." It is the same expression as that employed by our Lord in His most gracious invitation to all anxious and sin-burdened souls. "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy-laden, and I will give you *rest.*" No Christian will deny that much more than phy-

sical or even mental rest, is involved in this promise. The assurance of forgiveness, the tranquil conscience; "the peace of God which passeth all understanding," "Christ in us the hope of glory,"—if such are the privileges of believing souls on earth, no less, we may be well assured, can be their portion in the world to come.

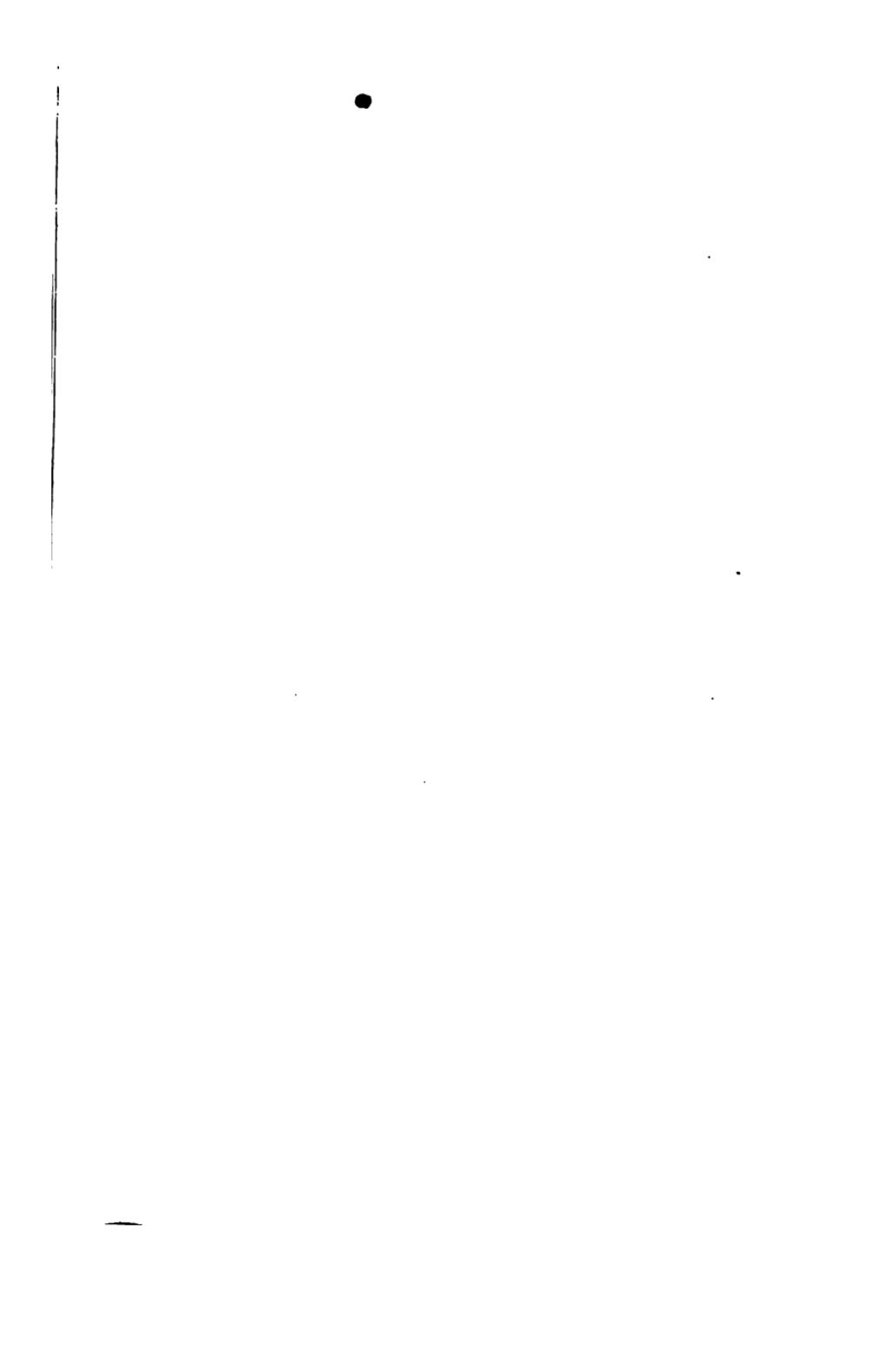
Indeed it appears probable that these souls under the altar are at least to be reckoned amongst that innumerable company of whom such glorious things are spoken in the later verses of the following chapter:—"After this I beheld, and lo! a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, *clothed with white robes*, and palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these that are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, therefore are they before the

throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple, and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them: they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

This entire vision must, it should seem, refer to the intermediate and not to the final state, since it occurs under the sixth seal. It is not until the seventh trumpet sounds, after the opening of the seventh seal, that the great voices are heard in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ."

SECTION V.

SUPPLEMENTARY TESTIMONIES.



CHAPTER XVII.

SUPPLEMENTARY TESTIMONIES.

PART I.

PRAYER BOOK, HOMILIES.

IN the study of theology there is a safe canon to the effect that “whatsoever is undoubtedly *new* is certainly *false*.” It is to me, therefore, a great satisfaction to find that the foregoing treatise, whilst almost entirely the result of independent lucubrations upon the Scriptures of God, cannot be accused of *originality*, since it may be endorsed by a series of the most illustrious names in the Church of Christ.

I begin, as in duty bound, with the formularies of the Church of England. The allusions to the place and state of the souls of the righteous after death, in our incomparable Liturgy, though few and scattered, are yet explicit, and will be found to sanction in unhesitating terms the opinions expressed in this book.

It might, I think, be inferred that the soul enters at death *immediately* upon its bliss, from the closing words of the Absolution. Here God is besought "to grant us true repentance, and His Holy Spirit, that those things may please Him which we do at this present, and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy, so that *at the last* we may come to His eternal joy."

In the sublime hymn called the *Te Deum laudamus*, this view of the conscious existence and present happiness of the faithful dead is placed beyond all doubt. Though of unknown authorship it was certainly composed not later than the fifth century. It has been in use throughout Christendom from that time to the present, and, since it is in the nature of a creed, may be regarded as representing the deliberate judgment of the Church of Christ on the several articles of the faith which it embraces. In this hymn the Church on earth unites in praising God, not only with Cherubim and Seraphim and all the angelic powers, but also with the glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets and the noble—in the original "candidatus" *i.e.* white-robed—army of martyrs. In the alternative canticle, *Benedicite*

omnia opera, which is also of anonymous origin, the whole creation, inanimate as well as animate, is called upon to bless the Lord ; whilst, amongst those who can render Him *reasonable service*, *the righteous dead* are included, “ O ye spirits and souls of the righteous, bless ye the Lord, praise Him, and magnify Him for ever.”

In the prayer for the Queen’s Majesty, *instant happiness* seems to be anticipated as the portion of the godly after their departure out of this world. The King of Kings and only Ruler of Princes is besought “ to endow her plenteously with heavenly gifts, to grant her in health and wealth long to live ; to strengthen her that she may vanquish and overcome all her enemies, so that *finally, after this life*, she may attain everlasting joy and felicity.”

Is not the like expectation implied in the first prayer in the Baptismal Service ? “ We beseech Thee, for Thine infinite mercies, that Thou wilt mercifully look upon this child ; wash him and sanctify him with the Holy Ghost ; that he, being delivered from Thy wrath, may be received into the ark of Christ’s Church, and being steadfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity, *may so pass the waves of this troublesome world, that finally he may come to the land of everlasting life.*”

As there is *literally* nothing intervening betwixt the sea and its shores, so the teaching of this *metaphor* would seem to be that there is nothing—no dreary hiatus of unconsciousness—intervening between the troubled ocean of time and the safe haven of eternity.

In the order for the Visitation of the Sick, there can be no question but that this is the view taken by our Church in her corporate capacity. The second prayer for the sick person ends thus—"or else give him grace so to take Thy visitation, that, *after this painful life ended*, he may dwell with Thee in life everlasting."

Lest there should still be a doubt in the minds of any as to the exact import of these words, I would refer them to the corresponding clause in "the Prayer for a Sick Child," at the end of the service. Here, if recovery be not granted, God is asked to receive him into those heavenly habitations where the souls of them that sleep in the Lord Jesus enjoy perpetual rest and felicity. The commendatory prayer for a sick person at the point of departure opens thus:—"O Almighty God, with whom do live the spirits of just men made perfect, after they are delivered from their earthly prisons."

Again, in the first collect in the Communion of

the Sick, it is said, "We beseech Thee to have mercy upon this Thy servant visited with Thine hand, and to grant that he may take his sickness patiently, and recover his bodily health, and *whencever his soul shall depart from the body*, it may be without spot presented unto Thee." The passage chosen for the gospel (St. John v. 24) inculcates the like most comfortable doctrine. "Verily, verily I say unto you, He that heareth my word and believeth on Him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, *but is passed* from death into life."

Once more, in the Burial Service, God is thus invoked: "Almighty God, with whom do *live* the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord, and with whom the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, *are in joy and felicity*."

My next appeal is to the Homilies, composed in the year of grace 1547, and put forth by authority of Queen Elizabeth and of Convocation in the year 1574. These undeniably embody the mature convictions of those shining lights and blessed martyrs of the Reformation, Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer, and are entirely in favour of the views upheld in this volume concerning the conscious

felicity of the souls of the righteous between death and the general resurrection.

In the homily on the fear of death it is said : “ Thus we see three causes why worldly men fear death. One, because they shall lose thereby their worldly homes, riches, possessions, and all their hearts' desires ; another, because of the painful diseases and bitter pangs which commonly men suffer, either before or at the time of death ; but the chief cause above all other is, the dread of the miserable state of eternal damnation both of body and soul which they fear shall follow after their departing from the worldly pleasures of this present life. But, everlasting thanks to Almighty God, there is never a one of all these causes,—no, nor yet they all together,—that can make a true Christian man afraid to die, which is the very member of Christ, the temple of the Holy Ghost, the son of God, and the very inheritor of the everlasting kingdom of heaven ; but plainly contrary, he conceiveth great and many causes, undoubtedly grounded upon the infallible and everlasting truth of the Word of God, which moveth him, not only to put away the fear of bodily death, but also for the manifold benefits and singular commodities which ensue unto every

faithful person by reason of the same, to wish, desire, and long heartily for it. For death shall be to him no death at all ; but a very deliverance from death, from all pains, cares and sorrows, miseries and wretchedness of this world, and the very entry into rest and a beginning of everlasting joy ; a tasting of heavenly pleasures so great, that neither tongue is able to express, neither eye to see, nor ear to hear them ; no, nor any earthly man's heart to conceive them. . . . Thus is bodily death a door, or entering in, to life, and therefore not so much dreadful, if it be rightly considered, as it is comfortable ; not a mischief, but a remedy for all mischief ; no enemy, but a friend ; not a cruel tyrant, but a gentle guide ; leading us not to mortality, but to immortality ; not to sorrow and pain, but to joy and pleasure ; and that to endure for ever, if it be thankfully taken and accepted as God's messenger and patiently borne of us, for Christ's love, that suffered most painful death for our love, to redeem us from death eternal. . . . Therefore, if we have Christ, then have we with Him and by Him all good things whatsoever we can in our hearts wish or desire, as victory over death, sin, and hell ; we have the favour of God, peace with Him, holiness, wisdom, justice, power,

life and redemption ; we have by Him perpetual health, wealth, joy, and bliss everlasting. . . . Therefore let us be always of good comfort, for we know that so long as we be in the body we be, as it were, far from God, in a strange country, subject to many perils, walking without perfect sight and knowledge of Almighty God, only seeing Him by faith in Holy Scriptures. But we have a courage and desire rather to be at home with God and our Saviour Christ, far from the body, where we may behold His Godhead, as he is, face to face, to our everlasting comfort. These are St. Paul's words in effect, whereby we may perceive that the life in this world is resembled and likened to a pilgrimage in a strange country, far from God, and that death delivering us from our bodies, doth send us straight home into our own country, and maketh us to dwell presently with God for ever, in everlasting rest and quietness ; so that to die is no loss, but profit and winning to all Christian people. What lost the thief that hanged on the cross with Christ by his bodily death ? Yea ! how much did he gain by it ? Did not our Saviour say unto him, 'This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise ?' And Lazarus, that faithful person that lay before the rich man's

gate, pained with sores and pined with hunger, did not death highly profit and promote him, which by the ministry of angels sent him into Abraham's bosom, a place of rest, joy, and heavenly consolation ! Let us think none other, good Christian people, but Christ hath prepared and made ready before, the same joy and felicity for us that He prepared for Lazarus and the thief. . . . Now the holy fathers of the old law and all faithful and righteous men, which departed before our Saviour Christ's ascension into heaven, did by death depart from troubles unto rest, from the hands of their enemies into the hands of God, from sorrows and sicknesses unto joyful refreshing in Abraham's bosom, a place of all comfort and consolation, as the Scriptures do plainly, by manifest words, testify."

Here follow several quotations from the Apocrypha, but since these are only to be read "for example of life and instruction of manners," and may not be used to prove any doctrine, I shall omit them.

When, however, the homily returns to the very Word of God, we may safely adopt its conclusions. Thus it continues :—" Of Abraham's bosom :

Christ's words be so plain that a Christian man needeth no more proof of it. Now, then, if this were the state of the holy fathers and righteous men before the coming of our Saviour, and before He was glorified, how much more ought all we to have a steadfast faith and a sure hope of this blessed state and condition after our death, seeing that our Saviour now hath performed the whole work of our redemption, and is gloriously ascended into heaven, to prepare our dwelling-places with Him, and said unto His Father, 'I will, that where I am, my servants shall be with me.' And we know that whatsoever Christ will, His Father will the same; wherefore it cannot be but if we be His faithful servants, our souls shall be with Him after our departure out of this life.

"St. Stephen, even when he was stoned to death—even in the midst of his torments,—what was his mind most upon? 'When he was full of the Holy Ghost,' saith Holy Scripture, 'having his eyes lifted up unto heaven, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.' The which truth, after he had confessed boldly before the enemies of Christ, they drew him out of the city, and there they stoned him, who cried unto God

saying, 'Lord Jesus Christ, take my spirit.' And doth not our Saviour say plainly in St. John's gospel, 'Verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth My word and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and cometh not into judgment, but shall pass from death to life.' Shall we not, then, think that death to be precious by the which we pass into life? Therefore it is a true saying of the prophet, 'the death of the holy and righteous man is precious in the Lord's sight.' Holy Simeon, after that he had his heart's desire in seeing our Saviour, that he even longed for all his life, he embraced or took Him in his arms and said, 'Now, Lord, let me depart in peace, for mine eyes have beheld that Saviour which Thou hast prepared for all nations. . . .' And we see by Holy Scripture, and other ancient histories of martyrs, that the holy, faithful, and righteous, ever since Christ's ascension, in their death did not doubt but that they went to Christ, which is our life, health, wealth, and salvation. . . . Therefore let us diligently foresee that our faith and hope which we have received in Almighty God and in our Saviour Christ wax not faint, nor that the love which we bear to Him wax not cold; but let us

study daily and diligently to show ourselves to be the true honourers and lovers of God, by keeping of His commandments, by doing of good deeds unto our needy neighbours, relieving, by all means that we can, their poverty with our abundance and plenty, their ignorance with our wisdom and learning, and comfort their weakness with our strength and authority; calling all men back from evil doing by godly counsel and good example, persevering still in well-doing so long as we live. So shall we not need to fear death from any of those three causes afore-mentioned, nor yet for any other cause that can be imagined. But, contrary, considering the manifold sicknesses, troubles, and sorrows of this present life, the dangers of this perilous pilgrimage, and the great incumbrance which our spirit hath, by its sinful flesh and frail body, subject unto death; considering also the manifold sorrows and dangerous deceits of the world on every side, the intolerable pride, covetousness, and lechery in time of prosperity, the impatient murmuring of them that be worldly in time of adversity, which cease not to withdraw us from God and our Saviour Christ. . . . the faithful Christian man which considereth all these miseries,

perils, and incommodities whereunto he is subject so long as he liveth here on earth, and on the other part considereth that blessed and comfortable state of the heavenly life to come, and the sweet condition of them that depart in the Lord ; how they are delivered from the continual encumbrance of their mortal and sinful body ; from all the malice, crafts and deceits of this world ; from all the assaults of their ghostly enemy, the devil ; to live in peace, rest, and endless quietness ; to live in the fellowship of innumerable angels, prophets, martyrs, and confessors ; finally, unto the presence of Almighty God and our Saviour Jesus Christ ; he that doth consider all these things, and believeth them, assuredly as they are to be believed, even from the bottom of his heart, being established in God in this true faith, having a quiet conscience in Christ, a firm hope and assured trust in God's mercy through the merits of Jesus Christ, to obtain this quietness, rest, and everlasting joy, shall not only be without fear of bodily death when it cometh, but certainly, as St. Paul did, so shall he gladly, according to God's will, and when it pleaseth God to call him out of this life, greatly desire in his heart that he may be rid from all

these occasions of evil, and live ever to God's pleasure, in perfect obedience to His will, with our Saviour Jesus Christ, to whose gracious presence the Lord of His infinite mercy and grace, bring us to reign with Him in life everlasting, to whom with our Heavenly Father and the Holy Ghost be glory in worlds without end. Amen."

CHAPTER XVIII.

SUPPLEMENTARY TESTIMONIES.

PART II.

BISHOP JEREMY TAYLOR—BISHOP HALL—BISHOP PEARSON.

BISHOP JEREMY TAYLOR, in his right learned and devout treatise upon “Holy Dying,” proounds these amongst many other reasons why the faithful should not fear to die: “If thou wilt be fearless of death, endeavour to be in love with the felicities of saints and angels, and be once persuaded to believe that there is a condition of living better than this; that there are creatures more noble than we; that above, there is a country better than ours; that the inhabitants know more and know better, and are in places of rest and desire; and first learn to value it, and then learn to purchase it, and death cannot be a formidable thing which lets us into so much joy and so much felicity. And indeed, who would not

think his condition mended, if he passed from conversing with dull mortals, with ignorant and foolish persons, with tyrants, and enemies of learning, to converse with Homer and Plato, with Socrates and Cicero, with Plutarch and Fabricius?

"So *the heathens* speculated, but we consider higher. The dead that die in the Lord shall converse with St. Paul, and all the college of the Apostles and all the saints and martyrs; with all the good men whose memory we preserve in honour; with excellent kings and holy bishops, and with the great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls—Jesus Christ, and with God himself. For 'Christ died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we might live together with Him.' Then we shall be free from lust and envy, from fear and rage, from covetousness and sorrow, from tears and cowardice; and these indeed, properly, are the only evils that are contrary to felicity and wisdom. Then we shall see strange things and know new propositions and all things, in another manner and to higher purposes. Every wise man therefore will despise the little evils of that state (*i.e.* death), which indeed is the daughter of fear, but the mother of rest, and peace, and felicity."

My next example is culled from the *Contem-*

plations of Bishop Hall. Brimful as these are of quaint conceits, of epigrammatic and sometimes forced antitheses, the heaven-born genius and fervent piety which pervade every line must ever secure for them a foremost place in Christian homiletics. Of the penitent thief he says, "He that before had nothing in his eye but present death and torture, is now lifted up above his cross in a blessed ambition : 'Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.' Is this the voice of a thief or of a disciple? Give me leave, O Saviour, to borrow Thine own words : 'Verily, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel !' He saw Thee hanging miserably by him, and yet styles Thee Lord! He saw Thee dying, yet talks of Thy kingdom : he felt himself dying, yet talks of a future remembrance. O faith, stronger than death, that can look beyond the cross at a crown —beyond dissolution at a remembrance of life and glory! Which of Thine eleven was heard to speak so gracious a word to Thee in these Thy last pangs! After Thy resurrection and knowledge of Thine impossible condition, it was not strange for *them* to talk of Thy kingdom ; but in the midst of Thy shameful death, for a dying malefactor to speak of Thy reigning and to

implore Thy remembrance of himself in Thy kingdom, it is such an improvement of faith as ravisheth my soul with admiration. O blessed thief that hast thus happily *stolen* heaven! How worthy hath thy Saviour made thee to be a partner of His sufferings, a pattern of undaunted belief, a spectacle of unspeakable mercy! ‘This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.’ Before, I wondered at thy faith; now I envy thy felicity. Thou cravedst a *remembrance*; thy Saviour speaks of a *present possession*. ‘This day:’ thou suedst for remembrance as a favour to the absent: thy Saviour speaks of thy presence with Him: thou spakest of a kingdom: thy Saviour, of Paradise. As no disciple could be more faithful, so no saint could be happier. O Saviour, what a precedent is this of Thy free and powerful grace! When *Thou* wilt give, what unworthiness can bar us from mercy? When *Thou* wilt give, what time can prejudice our vocation? Who can despair of Thy goodness, when he that in the morning was posting towards hell is in the evening with Thee in Paradise?”

Again, in his “Contemplation” of our first parents after they were thrust out of Eden, he says, “Neither do I care to seek where that

Paradise was which we lost ; I know where *that* Paradise is which we must care to seek and hope to find. As man was the image of God, so was that earthly Paradise an image of heaven : both the *images* are defaced ; both the *first patterns* are eternal. Adam was in the first and stayed not : in the second is the second Adam, which said, ‘This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.’ *There* was that chosen vessel St. Paul, and heard and saw what could not be expressed. By how much the third heaven exceeds the richest earth, so much doth that Paradise whereto we aspire exceed that which we have lost.”

My next witness is also a bishop of the Church of England, and perhaps the greatest of the three whose testimonies have been adduced hitherto. Though all three were patterns of piety and prodigies of learning, Bishop Pearson, from whose immortal *Exposition of the Creed* I now make a few extracts, excelled his brethren in the strict logical faculty. His work is not only an example of enormous research and of the most loyal subjection to God’s written word, but is also a masterpiece of close and powerful reasoning.

Under that article of the Apostles’ Creed, “He descended into hell,” he writes : “For the better

understanding of this exposition, there are several things to be observed, both in respect to the matter of it and in reference to the authority of the Fathers. First, therefore, this must be laid down as a certain and necessary truth, that the soul of man when he dieth, dieth not, but returneth unto Him that gave it, to be disposed of at His will and pleasure, according to the ground of our Saviour's counsel, 'Fear not them which kill the body but cannot kill the soul.' That better part of us, therefore, doth exist and live, either by virtue of its spiritual and immortal nature, as we believe, or at least by the will of God and His power, upholding and preserving it from dissolution, as many of the Fathers thought.

"This soul, thus existing after death and separated from the body, though of a nature spiritual, is really and truly in some place, so that it is true to say, this is really and truly present here, and not elsewhere.

"Again, the soul of man, which, while he lived, gave life to the body, and was the fountain of all vital action, in that separate existence after death *must not be conceived to sleep, but still to exercise the powers of understanding and of willing, and to be subject to the affections of joy and sorrow.* Upon

which is grounded the different estate and condition of the souls of men during that time of separation: some of them by the mercy of God being placed in peace and rest, in joy and happiness; others, by the justice of the same God, left to sorrow, pains, and misery.

"Now, as the souls at the hour of death are really separated from the bodies, so the place where they are in rest or misery after death is certainly distinct from the place in which they lived. They do not go together with the body to the grave: but as the sepulchre is appointed for our flesh, so there is another receptacle or habitation and mansion for our spirits. From whence it followeth, that in death the soul doth certainly pass by a real motion from that place in which it did inform the body, and is translated to that place, and unto that society, which God of His mercy or justice hath allotted to it. . . . There is no certainty that the souls of the just, the patriarchs and the rest of the people of God, were kept in any place *below*. 'The bosom of Abraham' might well be in the heavens above, far from any regions where the devil and his angels were. The Scriptures nowhere tell us that the spirits of just men went unto, or did remain in, hell; the place in which

the rich man was in torments after death is called hell, but that into which the angels carried the poor man's soul is not termed so. There was a vast distance between these two ; nor is it likely that the angels, which see the face of God, should be sent down from heaven to convey the souls of the just into that place where the face of God cannot be seen. When God translated Enoch, and Elias was carried up in a chariot to heaven, they seem not to be conveyed to a place where there was no vision of God : and yet it is most probable that *Moses* was with Elias as well *before* as upon the mount. Nor is there any reason to conceive that Abraham should be in any worse place or condition than Enoch was, seeing he had as great a testimony that he pleased God as Enoch had."

CHAPTER XIX.

SUPPLEMENTARY TESTIMONIES.

PART III.

RICHARD BAXTER—JOHN BUNYAN—BISHOP BUTLER.

IN accordance with the dictates of *true* Catholicity, and as of scarcely less weight than the foregoing testimonies of distinguished prelates of my own Church, I shall now quote from two equally devout and celebrated Nonconformist writers. And first, let us hear what Richard Baxter has to say on this subject. In his meditations on *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*, he writes, “The souls of believers do enjoy inconceivable blessedness and glory even while they remain separated from their bodies. What can be more plain than those words of Paul? ‘We are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home, in the body, we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and willing rather

to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.' Or these, 'I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.' If Paul had not expected to enjoy Christ till the resurrection, why should he be in a strait, or desire to depart? Nay,—should he not have been loath to depart upon the very same grounds? For, while he was in the flesh, he enjoyed something of Christ.

"Plain enough is that of Christ to the thief, 'This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.' In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, it seems unlikely Christ would so evidently intimate and suppose the soul's happiness or misery after death, if there were no such matter.

"Our Lord's argument for the resurrection supposes that 'God, being not the God of the dead but of the living,' therefore Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were then living, in soul.

"If the 'blessedness of the dead that die in the Lord' were only in resting in the grave: then a beast or a stone were as blessed. Nay, it were evidently a curse and not a blessing. For was not life a great mercy? Was it not a greater mercy to serve God and do good—to enjoy all the comforts of life, the fellowship of the saints,

the comfort of ordinances, and much of Christ in all—than to lie rotting in the grave? Therefore some further blessing is there promised. How else is it said, ‘We are come to the spirits of just men, made perfect’? Does not Scripture tell us that Enoch and Elias are taken up already? And shall we think they possess that glory alone? Did not Peter, James, and John see Moses also with Christ on the mount? Yet the Scripture saith Moses died. And is it likely Christ deluded their senses in showing them Moses, if he should not partake of that glory till the resurrection?

“And is not that of Stephen as plain as we can desire? ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Surely, if the Lord receives it, it is neither asleep, nor dead, nor annihilated; but it is where He is, and beholds His glory.

“That of the wise man is of the same import. ‘The spirit shall return to God Who gave it.’ Why are we said to have eternal life, and that to know God is life eternal, and that a believer on the Son hath everlasting life? If there be as great an interruption of our life as till the resurrection, this is no eternal life. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are spoken of as ‘suffering the

vengeance of eternal fire.' And if the wicked already suffer eternal fire, then no doubt but the godly enjoy eternal blessedness.

"When John saw his glorious revelation, he is said to be 'in the Spirit,' and 'carried' away in the Spirit.' And when Paul was caught up into the third heaven, he knew not 'whether in the body or out of the body.'

"When Christ says, 'Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul,' does it not plainly imply that when wicked men have killed our bodies, that is, have separated the souls from them, yet the souls are still alive. The soul of Christ was alive when His body was dead, and therefore so shall be ours too. This appears by His words to the thief: 'To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise;' and also by His voice on the cross, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.' If the spirits of those that were 'disobedient in the days of Noah' were in prison, that is, in a living and suffering state, then certainly the spirits of the just are in an opposite condition of happiness. Therefore faithful souls shall no sooner leave their prisons of flesh, but angels will be their convoy; Christ, with all the perfected spirits of the just, will be their companions;

Heaven will be their residence, and God their happiness."

This was Baxter's belief, and because he so believed, he prays towards the close of his work : "As my flesh desired what my spirit abhorred, so now let my spirit desire that day which my flesh abhorreth ; that my friends may not with so much sorrow await the departure of my soul, as my soul, with joy, shall wait for its own departure.

"Then let me 'die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his,' even a removal to that glory which shall never end. Then let Thy convoy of angels bring my departing soul among the perfected spirits of the just, and let me follow my dear friends that have died in Christ before me ; and while my sorrowing friends are weeping over my grave, let my spirit repose with Thee in rest."

That sturdy Puritan, John Bunyan, shall next be summoned. "An illiterate sectary" he doubtless was in the eyes of the ecclesiastical rulers of those days ; nevertheless the verdict of posterity pronounces him to have been endowed with the rarest genius. He was the prince of allegorists, and—highest praise of all—"a man mighty in the Scriptures."

Of his *Pilgrim's Progress*, Lord Macaulay, no mean authority, has said, "That wonderful book, while it obtains admiration from the most fastidious critics, is loved by those who are too simple to admire it. Dr. Johnson, all whose studies were desultory, and who hated, as he said, to read books through, made an exception in favour of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. That work was one of the two or three works which he wished longer. It was by no common merit that the illiterate sectary extracted praise like this from the most pedantic of critics and the most bigoted of Tories.

"In the wildest parts of Scotland the *Pilgrim's Progress* is the delight of the peasantry. In every nursery the *Pilgrim's Progress* is a greater favourite than *Jack the Giant Killer*. Every reader knows the straight and narrow path, as well as he knows a road in which he has gone backwards and forwards a hundred times. This is the highest miracle of genius, that things which are not, should be as though they were; that the imaginations of one mind should become the personal recollections of another. And this miracle the tinker has wrought."

It is from the final pages of this extraordinary book that I now quote.

Christian and his companion, Hopeful, have at length escaped all the dangers and surmounted all the obstacles that beset their path, and are nearing their journey's end. They have passed through the land of Beulah, which was on the confines of the celestial city, where the air was very sweet and pleasant, where they heard continually the singing of birds, and saw every day the flowers appear on the earth. But, to let our author tell his own tale in his own words :

"Now, as they walked in this land, they had more rejoicing than in parts more remote from the kingdom to which they were bound : and drawing yet nearer to the city, they had a more perfect view thereof. It was built of pearls and precious stones, also the streets thereof were paved with gold, so that by reason of the natural glory of the city, and the reflection of the sun-beams upon it, Christian with desire fell sick. Hopeful also had a fit or two of the same disease. But being a little strengthened, and better able to bear their sickness, they walked on their way and came yet nearer and nearer, where were orchards, vineyards and gardens, and their gates opened into the highway. Now, as they come up to these places, behold the

gardener stood in the way, to whom the pilgrims said, ‘Whose goodly vineyards and gardens are these?’ He answered, ‘They are the King’s, and are planted here for His own delight, and also for the solace of pilgrims.’ So the gardener had them into the vineyards, and bade them refresh themselves with dainties: he also showed them there the King’s walks and arbours, where He delighted to be: and here they tarried and slept.

“So then, I saw when they awoke, they addressed themselves to go up to the city. But as I said, the reflection of the sun upon the city—for the city was of pure gold—was so extremely glorious that they could not as yet, with open face behold it, but through an instrument made for that purpose. So I saw, that as they went on, there met them two men, in raiment that shone like gold, also their faces shone as the light. These men asked the pilgrims whence they came, and they told them. They also asked them where they had lodged, what difficulties and dangers, what comforts and pleasures, they had met with in the way. And they told them. Then said the men that met them, ‘You have but two more difficulties to meet with and then you are in the city.’ Christian and his com-

panion then asked the men to go along with them; so they told them that they would. But said they, ‘ You must obtain it by your own faith.’

“ So I saw in my dream that they went on together till they came in sight of the gate. Now I further saw that betwixt them and the gate was a river; but there was no bridge to go over, and the river was very deep. At the sight therefore of this river, the pilgrims were much stunned, but the men that went with them said, ‘ You must go through or you cannot come to the gate.’ The pilgrims then began to inquire if there was no other way to the gate. To which they answered, ‘ Yes, but there have not any,—save two, to wit, Enoch and Elijah,—been permitted to tread that path since the foundation of the world, nor shall until the last trumpet shall sound.’ The pilgrims—especially Christian—then began to despond in their minds, and looked this way and that, but they could find no way by which they might escape the river. Then they asked the men if the waters were all of a depth? They said, ‘ No;’ yet they could not help them in that case, ‘ For,’ said they, ‘ *you shall find it deeper or shallower, as you believe in the King of the*

place.' They then addressed themselves to the water, and on entering, Christian began to sink, and crying out to his good friend Hopeful, he said, ‘I sink in deep waters, the billows go over my head, and all the waves go over me.’ Then said the other, ‘Be of good cheer, my brother; I feel the bottom, and it is good.’ Then said Christian, ‘Ah! my friend, the sorrow of death hath compassed me about, I shall not see the land which flows with milk and honey.’ And with that a great horror and darkness fell upon Christian, so that he could not see before him. Also here, in a great measure, he lost his senses, so that he could neither remember, nor orderly talk of any of those sweet refreshments that he had met with in the way of his pilgrimage, but all the words that he spake still tended to discover that he had horror of mind, and heart-fears that he should die in that river and never obtain entrance in at the gate. Here also they that stood by perceived he had many troublesome thoughts of the sins he had committed, both since and before he began to be a pilgrim. It was also observed that he was troubled with apparitions of hobgoblins and evil spirits; for ever and anon he would intimate so much by words. Hopeful,

therefore, here had much ado to keep his brother's head above water, yea, sometimes he would be quite gone down, and then, ere a while, he would rise up again, half dead. Hopeful did also endeavour to comfort him saying, 'Brother, I see the gate, and men standing by to receive us.' But Christian would answer, 'It is you, it is you they wait for. You have been hopeful, ever since I knew you.' 'And so have you,' said he to Christian. 'Ah, brother,' said he, 'surely, if I was right He would now rise to help me, but for my sins He hath brought me into the snare and left me.' Then said Hopeful, 'My brother, you have quite forgot the text, where it is said of the wicked, "There are no bonds in their death, but their strength is firm; they are not troubled like other men, neither are they plagued like other men." These troubles and distresses that you go through in these waters are no sign that God hath forsaken you, but are sent to try you, whether you will call to mind that which heretofore you have received of His goodness, and live upon Him in your distresses.'

"Then I saw in my dream that Christian was in a muse a while. To whom also Hopeful added

these words, ‘Be of good cheer! Jesus Christ maketh thee whole:’ and with that Christian brake out with a loud voice, ‘O, I see Him again, and He tells me: “When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee.”’ Then they both took courage, and the enemy was after that, as still as a stone, until they had gone over. Christian therefore presently found ground to stand upon, and so it followed that the rest of the river was but shallow. Thus they got over.

“Now upon the bank of the river upon the other side, they saw the two shining men again, who there waited for them: wherefore, being come out of the river, they saluted them, saying, ‘We are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those that shall be heirs of salvation.’ Thus they went along towards the gate. Now you must note that the city stood upon a mighty hill; but the pilgrims went up that hill with ease, because they had these two men to lead them up by the arms; they had likewise left their mortal garments behind them in the river; for though they went in with them, they came out without them. They therefore went up here with much agility and speed, though the foundation

upon which the city was framed was higher than the clouds. They went up through the region of the air, sweetly talking as they went, being comforted because they had got safely over the river, and had such glorious companions to attend them.

"The talk that they had with the shining ones was about the glory of the place. They told them that the beauty and glory of it was inexpressible. 'There,' said they, 'is Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. You are going now,' said they, 'to the paradise of God, wherein you shall see the tree of life, and eat of the never-fading fruits thereof. And when you come there, you shall have white robes given you, and your walk and talk shall be every day with the King, even all the days of eternity. There you shall not see again such things as you saw when you were in the lower region upon the earth; to wit, sorrow, sickness, affliction and death; for "the former things are passed away." You are now going to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to the prophets, men that God hath taken away from the evil to come, and that "*are now resting upon their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.*"'

"The men then asked, 'What must we do in this holy place?' To whom it was answered, 'You must there receive the comforts of all your toil, and have joy for all your sorrow: you must reap what you have sown, even the fruit of all your prayers, and tears, and sufferings for the King by the way. In that place you must wear crowns of gold, and enjoy the perpetual sight and vision of the Holy One, for there "you shall see Him as He is." There, also, you shall serve Him continually with praise, and shouting, and thanksgiving—whom you desired to serve in the world, though with much difficulty, because of the infirmity of your flesh. There your eyes shall be delighted with seeing, and your ears with hearing, the pleasant voice of the Mighty One. There you shall enjoy your friends again that are gone thither before you, and there you shall with joy receive every one that follows into the holy place after you.' . . .

"Now, while they were thus drawing towards the gate, behold a company of the heavenly host came out to meet them, to whom it was said by the other two shining ones: 'These are the men which loved our Lord while they were in the world, and have left all for His holy name, and He hath

sent us to fetch them, and we have brought them thus far on their desired journey, that they may go in and look their Redeemer in the face with joy.' Then the heavenly host gave a great shout, saying, 'Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' There came also out at this time to meet them several of the King's trumpeters, clothed in white and shining raiment, who, with melodious and loud voices, made even the heavens to echo with their sound. These trumpeters saluted Christian and his fellow with ten thousand welcomes; and this they did with shouting and sound of trumpets. . . .

"Now when they were come up to the gate, there was written on it, in letters of gold: 'Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life and may enter in through the gates into the city.' Then I saw in my dream that the shining men bid them call at the gate, the which when they did, some from above looked over the gate, to wit, Enoch, Moses, Elijah, and others, to whom it was said; 'These pilgrims are come from the City of Destruction from the love that they bear to the King of the place': and then the pilgrims gave in unto them each man his certificate which they had received at the begin-

ning. Those, therefore, were carried in to the King, who, when he had read them, said, 'Where are the men?' to whom it was answered, 'They are standing without the gate.' The King then commanded to open the gate, 'That the righteous nation,' said He, 'which keepeth the truth, may enter in.' Now I saw in my dream that these two men went in at the gate, and lo! as they entered, they were transfigured, and they had raiment put on them that shone like gold. There were also some that met them with harps and crowns, and gave to them the harps to praise withal, and the crowns in token of honour. Then I heard, in my dream, that all the bells in the city rang for joy, and that it was said unto them, 'Enter ye into the joy of your Lord.' I also heard the men themselves singing with a loud voice, saying, 'Blessing, honour, glory, and power to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.'

"Now just as the gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them, and behold! the city shone like the sun: the streets also were paved with gold, and in them walked many men with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps to sing praises withal. There were also them that had wings, and they answered one

another without intermission, saying, ‘ Holy ! Holy ! Holy ! is the Lord.’ And after that they shut up the gates, which when I had seen, I wished myself among them.”

There are some, doubtless, who will stigmatise these glowing pictures of the future state of the righteous, as the day-dreams of an ignorant—albeit pious—enthusiast. For my own part, whilst I could not endorse all that is here written ; whilst I hold that some of these imaginings are over-crude and sensuous, others altogether mistaken,—notably those which relate to the New Jerusalem and the beatific vision of God,—I cannot withhold from our author the meed of a genuine admiration. I feel convinced that he has, in some particulars, confounded the *intermediate* with the *final* state of the redeemed, attributing to the former that supreme blessedness which is reserved for our perfect consummation both in body and soul in the latter. Nevertheless, I cannot refuse to do as he bids his readers in some rude, yet telling rhymes, at the end of the book :—

“ . . . But as for thee :
Do thou the substance of my matter see.
Put by the curtains, look within my veil :
Turn up my metaphors and do not fail ;

There, if thou seest them, such things to find
As will be helpful to an honest mind.
What of my dross thou findest there, be bold
To throw away, but yet preserve my gold.
What if my gold be wrappèd up in ore,
None throws away the apple for the core."

The joys of Paradise, I aver, though incomplete, are so desirable, that no tongue may tell, no pen may adequately describe them. I will rather, therefore, with the worthy Puritan editor of my copy of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, blame the author for the poverty of his picture than praise him for its perfection.

"Though Mr. Bunyan has been very happy in this spirited description, yet, were he alive, I am sure he would not be offended were I to say that it is faint and short—infinitely so—of the reality; and were he permitted to come in person and give another description, he could only say what the prophet and apostle tell us, 'Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.'

Why, even the cold and philosophic Bishop Butler, basing his conjectures on the deductions of unassisted reason, could say, "For aught we know of ourselves, of our present life, and of death,

death may immediately, in the natural course of things, put us into a higher and more enlarged state of life as our birth does; a state in which our capacities and sphere of perception and of action may be much greater than at present. For as our relation to our external organs of sense renders us capable of existing in our present state of *sensation*, so it may be the only natural hindrance to our existing immediately, and, of course, in a higher state of *reflection*. . . . And thus when we get out of this world, we may pass into new scenes and a new state of life and action, just as naturally as we came into this present. And this new state may naturally be a social one, and the advantages of it—advantages of every kind, may naturally be bestowed according to some fixed general laws of wisdom, upon every one in proportion to the degrees of his virtue."

CHAPTER XX.

SUPPLEMENTARY TESTIMONIES.

PART IV.

THE following extract is from the exposition of the "Thirty-nine Articles," by the Bishop of Winchester (Dr. Harold Browne).

Marked by a pure and luminous style, as well as by amplitude of critical and historical research, this work is, and is likely to remain, the standard authority on the subject of which it treats.

Under the third article, "On the descent of Christ into hell," he observes, "It is well known that the early Christians believed in an intermediate state of the soul between death and judgement ; and this intermediate state they, too, like the Jews, called 'Hades.'"

Justin Martyr (A.D. 165), speaking against some of the Gnostics, who denied the Resurrection, and

by consequence the intermediate state of the soul, says, "those who say that there is no resurrection, but that immediately after death their souls are taken up to heaven, these are not to be accounted either Christians or Jews." He himself distinctly asserts that "no souls die—that would be a God-send to the wicked—but the souls of good men remain in a better, of bad men in a worse place, awaiting the time of the judgement."

Tertullian (*c.* A.D. 200) distinctly states his belief that the souls of all men go to Hades until the resurrection : the souls of the just being in that part of Hades called the Bosom of Abraham, or Paradise.

Irenæus (*c.* A.D. 200) says that the souls of Christ's disciples "go into the invisible place prepared for them, and there remain awaiting the resurrection : after which they shall receive their bodies again, and rise complete ; that is, in the body, as the Lord arose, and so shall come to the vision of God."

Origen, in the fourth century, declares his belief that "not even the Apostles have received their perfect bliss : for the saints at their departure out of this life do not attain the full rewards of their labours, but are awaiting us who

still remain on earth, loitering though we be and slack."

Hilary, in the fifth century, says that it is "the law of human necessity that bodies should be buried and souls descend to Hades." And again, that "the faithful who depart out of the body are reserved in the safe keeping of the Lord for an entrance to the kingdom of heaven, being in the meantime placed in Abraham's bosom, whither the wicked cannot enter, on account of the great gulf fixed between them, until the time comes when they shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Ambrose (his contemporary) still more fully says that, "while the fulness of time is expected, the souls await the reward which is in store for them. Some, pain awaits ; others, glory. But, in the meantime, the former are not without trouble, nor are the latter without enjoyments."

We have now to consider what we learn from Scripture of the state of the departed, and of the meaning of Hades. The soul, after it has left the body, is not represented as passing directly to its final reward. Our Lord distinctly assures us that no one hath ascended to heaven but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is

in Heaven. If, then, no one had then ascended up to Heaven, except the Lord Jesus, the saints departed could not have gone to their place of final and eternal bliss which is always called Heaven.

Again, our Lord promised the thief on the cross that he should be with Him that day in Paradise. Now, Christ did not go from the Cross to Heaven. He went to Hell, or Hades. Therefore Paradise, to which the thief went with Him that very day, was not Heaven.

Again, in the Revelation, "the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God," are not represented as in Heaven; but they cry from under the altar; and though white robes are given them, they are bid "to rest for a little season, till their fellow-servants and their brethren should be fulfilled."

Again, our Lord and His Apostles never comfort the Church concerning those that are asleep, with the assurance that their souls are in Heaven; nor do they alarm the wicked with the fear that at the instant of death their souls will pass into a state of final punishment.

But, though the soul does not receive its final reward until the Resurrection and the Judgement, when it shall be united to the body, and receive

the sentence of the Judge, yet the soul does not die with the body, nor sleep in unconsciousness between death and the Judgement. (The Reformers of the Church of England were so strongly of this opinion that they put forth the following in the reign of Edward VI. as one of the Articles of the Church. It is the fortieth of the Forty-two Articles of 1552. "The souls of them that depart this life do neither die with their bodies nor sleep idly. They which say that the souls of such as depart hence do sleep, being without all sense, feeling, or perceiving until the Day of Judgement, or affirm that the souls die with the bodies, and at the last day shall be raised up with the same, do utterly dissent from the right belief declared to us in Holy Scripture.")

The soul of Samuel returned to earth after his body was in the grave. This took place four years after Samuel's death.

In the parable, both Lazarus and Dives are represented as alive, one in torments and the other in Abraham's bosom : and that all this took place before the Resurrection and the Judgement appears from this, that the brothers of the rich man were then alive on earth, and in their state of probation ; and that Dives wished that

Lazarus should be sent to them to bring them to repent,

The promise also to the thief on the cross, that he should be that day with Christ in Paradise, must show that his soul would not be in a state of insensibility, but of bliss.

St. Paul speaks of the Church, as among other companies, having in it "the spirits of just men made perfect," where the context shows that he refers to the present, not to the future state of Christian privilege and blessing. He declares of himself that he is "in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better."

But, if death be annihilation until the resurrection awakes both body and soul, he could hardly have called death better than life, or have spoken of it as "being with Christ"!

And again, the same Apostle, speaking of death, says, "Whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord"; and then adds, "we are willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord."

From all this we must conclude that the spirit still lives when it has left the body, and that, though it loses the benefit of having a bodily

tabernacle, yet in the case of pious men, *it is very vastly a gainer by death*, inasmuch as, though absent from the body, it enjoys the presence of Christ.

I think it hardly necessary to add more, to show that on this point the opinion of the ancients is more correct than that of the modern popular creeds: and that the Roman Catholic notions of Purgatory, *the common opinion that the soul at once passes to its final reward*, and the belief that the soul sleeps from death to Judgement, are all without support from the Scriptures of God.

In Archbishop Whately's unrivalled *Notes on the Parables of our Lord*, he thus explains the term "Abraham's Bosom." "It is a figurative phrase, to express the deep quietude of an innermost communion. Besides, the Jews, to whose theology the phrase belongs, spoke of all true believers as 'going to Abraham,' as being received 'into his bosom.' The phrase was equivalent for them to the being 'in the Garden of Eden,' or 'under the throne of glory'; gathered, that is, into the general receptacle of happy, but waiting, souls. Christ, by using, has been rightly considered as sanctioning and adopting the phrase; it has thus passed into the language of the Church, which has understood

by it the state of painless expectation, of blissful repose, to intervene between the death of the faithful in Christ Jesus, and their perfect consummation and bliss at His coming in His kingdom. It is Paradise; the place of the souls under the altar; it is—as some distinguish it—blessedness, but not glory. Thither, to that haven of rest and consolation, Lazarus, after all his troubles, was safely borne."

The quotation to which I now call your attention is from Dr. Pusey's lectures on the prophet Daniel. In this most learned and complete defence of the genuineness and authenticity of the prophet's writings, the whole tribe of rationalists, English and foreign, are met and worsted in fair fight.

Widely as one may differ from some of Dr. Pusey's theological tenets, there can be no doubt that his scholarship is of the very highest order; whilst the sincerity of his motives, the earnestness of his convictions, and the deep-toned piety of his life, must command the respect of all who are Christians first, although partisans, it may be, afterwards.

In the passage selected, he is proving that the old Fathers did not look only for temporal promises, but had hope in their deaths:—

"The doctrine of life after death lay for thoughtful minds in the continued relation of God to the patriarchs expressed in the title, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' For our Lord would not have blamed the Sadducees so severely, 'Ye therefore do greatly err,' unless, through their own fault, they had remained ignorant of what they might have known. 'God,' our Saviour adds, 'is not the God of the dead, but of the living.' He said not, '*I have been*,' but '*I am* the God of Abraham.' God—it lay in the words—took no transient care of those who were His; *He*, the unchangeable, could not be named from His relation to something so fleeting as man's visible existence here; *He*, the All-Good, did not enter into a relation to His creature only, of His own accord, Himself unforsaken, to end it; *He*, the Self-communicating, the Fountain of life, did not leave, without some portion of His life, those with whom He deigned to stand in so close communion; those who lived to Him, lived in Him and by Him, and they who lived by Him could not wholly die. . . . His interest in those He loves continues still after they were gathered to their fathers, and was continued on to their children; yet He took not an interest

in that which was not. All this and far more, lay in those deep, simple words, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’

“The belief in re-union after death lies also in the varied expressions of the association of the soul by death with those who had gone before. It was said first in the form of a promise: ‘Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace.’ Of Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, it is said, ‘He was gathered unto his people;’ words which do not intend a re-union of the bodies in a common burial-place, for Abraham was not buried with his fathers, nor was Ishmael; and Jacob speaks of it as something distinct from his burial: ‘I am gathered unto my people; bury me with my fathers.’ It means also more than a common lot of death. It speaks of the ‘I’ and of a congregation into which each ‘I’ should be received; the assembly of those who had been parted with ‘out of sight,’ for a time, but with whom, through death, he should be joined.

“David’s comfort of himself as to his child, ‘I shall go to him,’ implies the same belief of a personal re-union. The later language, ‘he slept with his fathers,’ contained the same truth. . . . The end of the ungodly (comp. Ps. 73) is evil,

sudden destruction ; and that end, like that of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram coming upon an evil life, is the earnest of an evil hereafter. If this life were all, it were all one how it ended. The Psalmist saw beyond, the contempt to which they should awaken : ‘ As a dream, when one awaketh, O Lord, thou shalt despise their image ’; their vain unsubstantial being, since it was void of God, a vain show, ‘ full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.’ What God despises must be full of contempt.”

“ On the other hand, he sums up the past, present, and future of the godly : ‘ I am continually with Thee ; Thou hast holden me by my right hand ; Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and after receive me to glory.’ The ‘ *after*,’ when God’s *guidance* is past, can be no other than the great ‘ hereafter.’ The words ‘ receive me,’ is the appropriated term for our ‘ take unto Himself.’ But the ground of this assurance lies deeper than the assurance itself, and so it sheds its light over much of Holy Scripture besides. Its ground is that same ground which our Lord pointed out in the title, ‘ God of Abraham.’ God was the Psalmist’s own God, and so He could not fail him. All which God had been to him, all which He was, He must be for ever, for He is unchangeable. It is an

inner revelation, such as heathenism could not know, because it could not know of union with God, that God could make Himself belong to the soul, as He had made the soul His own. ‘Whom have I in heaven?’ None had he save God. But then God, in all that wide heaven, was his; but then, He who was so his, must be his for ever. ‘My flesh and my heart faileth,’ *i.e.* though flesh and heart be consumed,—nay, he speaks of them as consumed already,—‘God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.’ ‘For ever!’ Not, then, for this little span of life only. Union with God is a pledge of immortality. But then every child of Israel who had learnt the truth of that psalm had in him the assurance of a *deathless unbroken unitedness with God.*”

From a work by the late Bishop Mant, entitled *The Happiness of the Blessed*, the great bulk of which, however, is devoted to a consideration of their final and perfect happiness after the general resurrection, I have made the following brief selections:—

“ From the foregoing passages we collect that the intermediate state of the souls of the righteous is one of rest and repose; not, however, of *insensibility*, but of *consciousness, and of positive and great enjoyment*: still that it will be succeeded

by another state of yet superior happiness, when 'the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed;' and when the crown of righteousness heretofore laid up for all who love the Lord's appearing shall be given to them by the Lord, the righteous Judge, in the presence of assembled men and angels on that day."

Then follows a sonnet, entitled "Rest in Christ."

"Hail, heavenly voice ! once heard in Patmos. Write,
'Henceforth the dead who die in Christ are blest :'
'Yea,' saith the Spirit, 'for they now shall rest
From all their labours.' But no dull dark night
That rest o'ershadows : '*tis the day-spring bright
Of bliss; the foretaste of a richer feast;*
A sleep, if sleep it be, of lively zest,
Peopled with visions of intense delight.
And, though the secrets of that resting-place
The soul embodied knows not, yet she knows
No sin is there God's likeness to deface,
To stint His love, no purgatorial woes ;
Her dross is left behind, nor mixture base
Mars the pure stream of her serene repose."

My next quotation is from a little book consisting of four sermons, written shortly before his death, by the late excellent and lamented Dean Alford. Commenting on the two texts, Luke xxiii. 43, and Phil. i. 23, he says :—

" Now in both these, one fact is simply declared, viz., that the departed spirit of the faithful man is with Christ. It is as if one bright light were lifted for us in the midst of a realm brooded over by impenetrable mist. For who knows whither the departed spirit has betaken itself when it has left us here? One of the most painful pangs in bereavement by death is the utter and absolute severance, without a spark of intelligence, of the departed. One hour life is blest with their presence; the next it is entirely and for ever gone from us, never to be heard of more. One word, one utterance—how precious in that moment of anguish do we feel that it would be! But we are certain it never will be granted us. None has ever come back who has told the story. Where the spirit wakes and finds itself—this none has ever declared to us, nor shall we know until our own turn comes. Now, in such a state of uncertainty, these texts speak for us a certain truth.

" The departed spirit is with Christ. I shall regard this revelation negatively and positively, as to what it disproves and as to what it implies.

" First, then, it disproves the idea of the spirit passing at death into a state of unconsciousness, from which it is to wake only at the great day of the resurrection. If it is to be with Christ, this

cannot be. Christ is in no such state of unconsciousness. He has entered into His rest, and is waiting till all things shall be put under His feet: and it would be a mere delusion to say of the blessed dead that they shall be with Christ, if they were to be virtually annihilated during this time that Christ is waiting for His kingdom.

“Besides, how then would the Lord’s promise to the thief be fulfilled? What consolation would it have been to him; what answer to his prayer to be remembered when Jesus came into His kingdom, if these words implied that he should be unconsciously sleeping while the Lord was enjoying His triumph? Therefore we may safely say, that the so-called ‘sleep of the soul,’ from the act of death till the resurrection, has no foundation in that which is revealed to us.

“It is perfectly true that the state of the departed is described to us as ‘sleeping in Jesus,’ or rather—for the words are a mis-rendering—‘a having fallen asleep through, or by, Jesus.’ But our texts are enough to show us that we must not take such an expression for more than it really implies. ‘Sleeping,’ or ‘falling asleep,’ was a name current among Jews and Christians, and even among the best of the heathen, for death, implying its peace and rest; implying, also, that it should be

followed by a waking ; but apparently with no intent to convey any idea of unconsciousness. It is a term used with reference to us, as well as to the dead. To us, they are as if they were asleep, removed from us in consciousness, as in presence. . . . So that we may safely assume thus much : that the moment a Christian's spirit is released from the body, it does enter into the presence of our blessed Lord and Saviour, in a way of which it knows nothing here ; a way which, compared to all that its previous faith could know of Him, is like presence of friends compared to absence.

" Now let us take another remarkable passage of Holy Writ, bearing on this same matter. St. John, in his first epistle, says, ' Beloved, now are we children of God, and it *never yet was manifested what we shall be : but if it should be manifested,* we know that we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is : ' for this is the more accurate rendering of the words ; meaning, if any one could come back or come down to us, and tell us what our future state is to be, the information could amount for us now only to this, that we shall be like Him, like Christ, because we shall see Him as He is. . . . We have thus gained this knowledge from St. John's words, that the sight of the blessed Lord, which will be enjoyed by the Christian's spirit on

its release from the body, will be accompanied by being also perfectly like Him.

" Now, if what we have been saying is true—and I have endeavoured not to go beyond the soberest inferences from the plain language of Scripture—if so much be true, then the moment of departure from the body puts an end for ever to this imperfect, struggling, fitful state of faith and doubt. The spirit that is but a moment gone, that has left that well-known familiar tabernacle of the body a sudden wreck of inanimate matter—that spirit is with the Lord. All doubt, all misgiving, is at an end. Every wave raised by this world's storms, this world's currents of interest, this world's rocks and shallows, is suddenly laid, and there is a great calm ; certainty for doubt : the sight of the Lord, for the conflict of assurance and misgiving : the face of Christ, for the mere faith in Christ—these have succeeded because the departed spirit is with the Lord.

" This sight of Christ, this calm of full unbroken assurance of His nearness and presence, what does it further imply ? As far as we can at present see, certainly as much as this, first, *the entire absence of evil from the spirit*. It would be impossible to be with Christ in any such sense, unless there were entire agreement in will and desire with Him. It

would be impossible thus to see Him as He is without being like Him. Let us imagine, if we can, the total extinction of evil in any one of our minds. How many energies, now tied and bound with the chain of sin, would spring up into action ! How many imprisoned yearnings would burst their bonds, and carry us onward to higher degrees of good ! And all these energies, all these yearnings, can exist in the disembodied spirit. It is in a waiting, a hoping state : the greater the upward yearnings, the greater the accumulated energies for God and His work, the higher will be the measure of glory to be attained after the redemption of the body and the completion of the entire man.

" Well, as another consequence following on the last, all conflict from that same moment is at an end. Conflict is ordained for us, is good for us, now. If it were to cease here below, we should fall back. We have not entered into rest; it would not be good for us to enter into rest in our present state. Here, this little platform, so to speak, of our personality, is drawn two ways, downward and upward : and it is for us who stand thereon to keep watch and ward that the downward prevail not : but from that moment, the dark links of the downward chain will have been for ever severed, and the golden cord that is let down from

the Throne will bear us upward and onward unopposed. So that, as to conflict, there will be perfect rest.

"Again, as all evil will be at an end, and all conflicts, so will all labour. 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; even so, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours.' Now labour here is a blessing, it is true; but it is also a weariness. It leads ever on to a greater blessing, the blessing of rest; Christ has entered into His rest, and the departed spirit shall be with Christ, faring as He fares, and a partaker of His condition. Any who have lived the ordinary term of life in God's service can testify how sweet it is to anticipate a cessation of the toil and the harassing of life: to be looking on to keep the great sabbath of the rest reserved for the people of God. And let none cavil at the thought that thus Adam may have rested his thousands of years, and the last taken of Adam's children, only a few moments. Time is only a relative term even to us. A dream of years long may pass during the sound that awakens a man: and a sleep of hours appears but a second. What do we know of Time, except as calculated by earthly objects? Day and night, the recurrence of meals; these constitute Time to us. Shut up a man in darkness, and administer his food at irregular

intervals, and he loses all count of Time whatever. Surely, then, no cavil on this score can be admitted. In that Presence where the departed spirits are, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

"Let us conclude with a consideration, to a Christian the most glorious of all. The spirit that is with Christ, in nearest presence and consciousness, knows Him as none know Him here. Here we speak of His purity, His righteousness, His love, His triumph and glory, with miserably imperfect thoughts, and in words still more imperfect than our thoughts. We are obliged to employ earthly images to set forth heavenly things. The revelations of Scripture itself are made through a medium of man's invention, and are bounded by our limited vocabulary. But then it will be so no longer. The Apostle compares our seeing *here* to that of one who beholds the face of his friend in a mirror of metal, sure to be tarnished and distorting: and our vision *there* to beholding the same, face to face,—the living features, the lips that move, the eyes that glisten."

"That spirit which has but now passed away, knows the love that passes our knowledge: contemplates things which God has prepared for them that love Him, such as eye has never seen, nor ear

heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.

“Therefore, beloved, let us be of good cheer concerning them that have fallen asleep through Jesus; and let us be of good cheer respecting ourselves. Good as it is to obey and serve God here, it has been far better for them to depart and be with Christ; and it will be far better for us, if we hold fast our faith and our confidence in Him, firm to the end. If to us to live is Christ, then to us to die will be gain.”

At the suggestion of the revered chief pastor of my diocese, the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol—who, in a recent interview, condescended to take a kindly interest in this my humble endeavour—I next subjoin an extract from the work of a celebrated Danish divine, Dr. Martinsen, bearing on the subject of the present inquiry—the intermediate state. To my mind, which is, I am aware, of the every-day, common-sense order, this treatise, able and learned as it is, appears too transcendental, or, in plain words, too far above the level on which men’s thoughts ordinarily move, to be acceptable or even intelligible to the average English Christian. Continental theology, I think, is prone to run into extremes. When not downright materialistic or

well-nigh blankly atheistic, it is apt to be pietistic and rhapsodical; or else it is extravagantly subjective, metaphysical, or whatever other hard name one chooses to employ expressive of its general unintelligibility. From this last defect Bishop Martinsen's great work seems by no means free. Whilst therefore quoting from it, as being in general agreement with the ideas put forth in this little volume, I am conscious that its author would no more subscribe to them, in their entirety, than I to those which he enunciates. To me, he is obscure, ultra-spiritual, even morose: to him, I should doubtless appear hyper-sensuous, or at least unduly sanguine with regard to the joys reserved for the righteous in the intermediate state. Indeed he assumes it to be a kind of modified purgatory—a prolonged and hardly painless discipline—from which the best are not exempt nor the worst excluded. How this strange doctrine is deducible from the plain letter of Scripture I cannot even conjecture. However, as there is a *general* though not a *particular* accord between us, I submit the following passages to the judgment of the discerning reader:—

“Neither in Holy Scripture, nor in the conception of an intermediate state, is there any foundation for the notion of a sleep of the soul from the

moment of death until the last day. As no soul leaves this present existence in a fully complete and prepared state, we must suppose that there is an intermediate state, a realm of progressive development, in which souls are prepared and matured for the final judgment. Though the Romish doctrine of purgatory is repudiated, because it is mixed up with so many crude and false positions, it nevertheless contains the truth that the intermediate state must, in a purely spiritual sense, be a purgatory, designed for the purifying of the soul. If we inquire what hints Scripture gives regarding the nature of this kingdom, we find that the New Testament calls it 'Hades,' thus reminding us of the Old Testament representation of Sheol, or the kingdom of shades. The departed are described in the New Testament as souls or spirits: they are divested of corporeity, have passed away out of the whole range of full daylight activity, and are waiting for the new and perfect body with which they shall be 'clothed upon.' . . . So far is the human soul in this state from drinking Lethe—the fabled river of forgetfulness—that it may evermore be said, 'their works do follow them': those moments of life which were hurried away and scattered in the stream of time, rise again, collected

together and absolutely present to the recollection—a recollection which must be viewed as bearing the same relation to our temporal consciousness as the true visions of poetry bear to the prose of finite life—a vision which must be the source either of joy or of terror, because it presents to view the real and deepest truth of consciousness, which may not only be comforting and bliss-giving, but judging and condemning truth also. As, therefore, their works thus follow departed spirits, they not only live and move in the element of bliss or woe which they have formed and prepared for themselves in time, but they continue to receive and work out a new state of consciousness, because they continue spiritually to mould and govern themselves in relation to the new manifestations of the Divine will now first presented to their view, and in this manner still to develop themselves until the last, the final judgment. . . . The soul cannot be conceived of within the realm of spirits as wholly natureless. For we must necessarily suppose that some hidden development of nature precedes and prepares the way for the future corporeity or the resurrection of the flesh; and the Apostle Paul expressly teaches that, though we do not possess the complete fulness and perfection of our being

in the realm of the dead, because in death we are unclothed and shall not be clothed again till the second coming of the Lord, yet that we are not entirely naked in the intermediate state, but are ‘clothed upon.’ We must therefore entertain the idea of some sort of clothing of the soul in the realm of the dead, in that cloister-like—we speak after the manner of men—that monastic or conventional world. But although we are thus obliged to conceive, in a vague way, of some intermediate kind of corporeity in the realm of the dead, this must not exclude the fundamental idea of that realm as one of inwardness and spirit. According to the fundamental representations of revelation, the life of man is to be lived in three cosmical spheres: first, the sphere in which we dwell in the flesh, our present life, whose prevailing bias is sensible and outward—for not only is all spiritual activity conditioned by sense, but the spirit groans under the tyranny of the flesh; next, a sphere in which we live in the spirit, wherein spirituality and inwardness is the fundamental feature, and this is the intermediate state; and lastly, a sphere in which we shall again live in the body, but in a glorified body and in a glorified nature, which is perfection—the renewal and perfecting of this world to its final goal. . . .

With Christ a new morning dawned upon the realm of the dead. As death has lost its sting through Christ, the kingdom of the dead has lost its horrors for those who believe in Him. As Christ is present in spirit, even in the realm of death, the believer knows that death to him is not loss but gain. 'I have a desire to depart,' said the Apostle, 'and to be with Christ'; or, as he elsewhere expresses it, 'to be at home with the Lord.' This expression, 'to be at home with the Lord,' finds its full explanation in what has already been developed. It describes the state after death to be one in which the soul is brought back from the periphery of life to the centre—a state in which the eternal only is of any moment: and it must accordingly be for the believer a state of blissful rest in the Lord, a mystical union with the Lord and the kingdom of His love, a state of joy. The soul must here find herself at home, because she finds herself in the region whither her essential desire and will were directed when she was in the flesh; she finds herself undisturbed by the hindrances which, while we are in the flesh, continually mar our fellowship with the Lord and exile us from Him. The state of the soul in Hades thus depends upon its relations to Christ, the centre of all souls.

It must be a different state for those who have hoped for Him and believed on Him, from what it is for those who have not believed on Him; whether these last be persons who had never known the Lord, or persons who had not decided for Him, or persons again, who had been His avowed enemies. Various regions thus necessarily present themselves in Hades, and we must accordingly speak of a Paradise, a hell, and an undetermined state. But none of these states can be considered to be fully and finally closed:¹ for even the blessed have still an inner history; they still need a purifying, an increase and growth in holiness and in bliss. While conversion must still be possible for the unconverted in Hades, it is also the region in which evil may imprint its whole essence, because there it must assume the impress of pure spirit."

The above extracts comprise rather more than one-half of Dr. Martinsen's dissertation on this confessedly abstruse topic. Should his views hereafter prove correct, all I can say is, that Scripture is but a delusive guide; and, whilst for the wicked the prospect of futurity is very

¹ What mean then those solemn words which our Saviour puts into the mouth of Abraham in his parable of Dives and Lazarus?
Conf. Luke xvi. 20.

tolerable, since they are assured of at least another chance in Hades, the outlook for the righteous is by no means so bright as it is represented in the Word of God.

The testimony which follows is that of the ripe scholar and devout Christian, Dr. Wordsworth, Bishop of Lincoln. In a sermon entitled "The Intermediate State of the Soul," he says:—"That the human soul does not sleep when separated from the body by death, but retains its consciousness in its disembodied state, is clear from His Divine words, 'Fear not them which kill the *body*, but are not able to kill the *soul*.' Our Lord here makes a distinction between the state of the body after death and the state of the soul after death. He says that the body may be killed, but the soul cannot. But what does He mean by being killed? He means 'is laid asleep.' For He has taught us that the hour is coming when all *bodies* will be *awakened*. 'Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour is coming when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man and shall come forth.' The body *sleeps* after death, and will be awakened from its slumbers by the peal of the last trumpet. Therefore, *if* the *soul sleeps* after death, there would be no difference, as our Lord asserts there is, between the state of the soul and

the state of the body after death. Therefore the soul does not sleep after death, but retains its consciousness.

"This is further evident from our Lord's parable of the rich man and Lazarus. In that parable the beggar dies: his body is cast into an obscure grave, but his soul is carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also dies and is buried. Meanwhile the world is going on as before. The rich man speaks of his five brethren as still living in their houses. But Christ uplifts the veil, and shows us the place where disembodied souls are; and there we see the rich man tormented and the poor man comforted. We see the soul of Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, which is another name for Paradise—the happy abode into which the souls of the faithful pass immediately after death: and it is called Abraham's bosom, because it is not a solitary place, but a happy place of holy society: and it is called from Abraham because Abraham was 'the friend of God,' and 'the father of the faithful': and it is called his 'bosom' from the Eastern manner of guests reclining at feasts, as St. John leaned, at the paschal feast, on the bosom of Christ: and because in that blessed place the souls of the faithful recline, as it were, at a spiritual banquet, and

are refreshed with spiritual delights, and enjoy sweet converse with the souls of holy men and women of every age, with Patriarchs and Prophets, Apostles and Evangelists, Saints, Martyrs, Confessors; and because at the Great Day they will be called forth, when the number of God's elect is accomplished, and they will be joined again to their bodies, and will 'sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.'

" Again, let us not imagine that the soul, at its departure from the body at the hour of death, passes into a region of slumber and insensibility. No, the atheist and the libertine, who desire the death of the soul, may dream of its sleep; but a faithful Christian knows that his soul, like its Divine Author, will neither slumber nor sleep. . . .

" At death the soul enters immediately into a state of happiness or misery; it goes to 'its own place,' and it then has an anticipation and fore-taste of the even greater happiness and misery on which it will enter when joined again to the body at the day of resurrection and judgment. Therefore let us not put off our repentance.

" Now, even now, 'the Judge standeth at the door.' And while we remember this solemn truth, let us not be betrayed into the error of thinking and of speaking of good men who are departed,

as if they were already admitted to the full felicity of *heaven*. Such a mode of speech overlooks the constitution of human nature itself. Man is composed of body as well as soul. And the soul's perfect happiness will not be attained before its re-union to the body. Such a mode of expression overlooks also the great doctrine of the resurrection of the body and the universal judgment to come ; and it mars the communion of saints and violates our own fellowship of hope and prayer with departed spirits, who wait for us, and whose happiness will not be completed without us, but will be perfected with ours at Christ's coming, for which they pray as well as we."

That eloquent divine, Canon Liddon, preaching recently at St. Paul's Cathedral, and alluding to the lamented death of Lord Beaconsfield, *approached*, though he did not actually *enter upon*, the subject of this treatise. The quotation, which is borrowed from an imperfect newspaper report, must only be taken as approximately accurate :—

" If he (Lord Beaconsfield) had *ceased to exist*, it would be natural only to reconsider, again and again, the years of varied and brilliant effort which closed on Tuesday last : but here in this temple of truth, we may not thus palter with the reality. None, as we know, cease to exist at death ; but

when, as in the case of the deceased statesman, the human mind gives evidence of many-sided and vigorous powers up to the very moment of dissolution, we seem to have before us a *sensible* basis for the independent conviction that it lives on beyond the catastrophe which has rent it from the body; that it is still, as before, eagerly and actively conscious, in the present and the future, but in a state of existence which is not only beyond experience but beyond imagination. Yes, with the dead, with all the dead, the only important question is, not what they have been in the sight and account of men, but what and where they are now. We cannot answer that question with certainty in the case of any human being: in the case of all we hope the best from the Eternal Mercy; but that question *has* an answer, and the question itself is infinitely more important than any other that can possibly be raised in connection with human life. After all, brethren, the great concern is, not what we are called here, or what the world has said about us for good or for evil, but what we are in the sight of God, the perfect moral Being. God alone is great, and that alone in His creatures which resembles Him will be deemed great hereafter."

I now bring my work to a close. In it, basing

my conclusions on the strong foundation of God's written Word, and confirming the same by an appeal to various learned and pious authors, I have sought to answer the momentous question, "What becomes of the souls of the righteous after death?" If, as must be admitted, even the trumpet of inspiration does not always give a certain sound respecting this matter, enough is revealed—not indeed to satisfy a carnal curiosity, yet enough to inspire our hopes, to banish our fears, and to strengthen our godly resolutions. No absolute dogma, requiring the assent of all Christian people, has been, or can be formulated concerning the intermediate state of the blessed dead; but that there exists a general agreement on this subject amongst those best able to form an opinion has been fully shown in the preceding pages. Let us then, dear reader, acquiesce for a little while in our partial ignorance, comforting one another with these words: "He that will do the will of God shall know of the doctrine;" and "if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall—hereafter if not here—reveal even this unto you."

FINIS.



